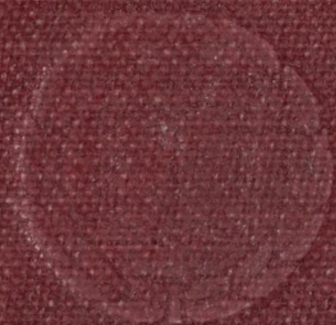


OUTSIDERS



ROBERT W. CHAMBERS



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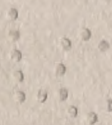
AN OUTLINE

BY

ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

Author of "Ashes of Empire," "The Haunts of Men," etc., etc.

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OUTSIDERS.

CHAPTER I.

A SHIP COMES IN.

In which Oliver Lock returns to a land where he possesses neither birthright, heritage, nor a mess of pottage.

SOMEWHERE in the dusk a cannon-shot shook the fog-hung silence ; faint bugle-notes from the harbour forts stole through the mist, fitful, melodious.

The city slept ; the watchers at her gates were waking.

Again the inland bugles blew at dawn ; the coast-lights faded, one by one ; chimes of a ship's bell swelled as the sea-breeze stirred, lingered in silvery echoes, mingling with the lapping of the waves on spray-drenched shoals.

Over the hidden city, deep in the smother of fog, the smoky disk of the sun burned like the red lens of a light-house.

A pallour crept out over the mist ; phantom waves moved, outlined under leaden wastes of fog ; seething currents hurried shoreward where the flat

flood tide purred on the pebbled shore, looping each shoal with ropes of foam.

A shower of light struck the zenith, the fog dissolved, the flood tide thickened into liquid gold.

Everywhere mist was lifting, trailing over the waves, leaving a jewelled wake; the waste of steaming waters shimmered as the pale radiance deepened to a glory; there was a glare, a blinding flare of yellow light, and the sun flashed out across the water to the grey horizon.

Through the quivering mirage the black hull of an ocean liner towered, smoke hanging above her funnels, a white wave clinging to her bows. As she passed up the bay a passenger appeared on the hurricane deck, shading his face with both hands, eyes fixed on a strange human shape that loomed colossal in the dissolving fog—a woman's figure, bronze, enormous, with one huge naked arm flung skyward, menacing the Old World with her flaming torch.

And now, beyond, the New World opened out, where silvery waters washed the flanks of a silent city—a city of massed silhouettes and closely packed shapes,—a city of purple shadows and towers of shade that changed from mauve to amber, then to pink and topaz; and, as the sun at last tore the mist with its million splintered rays, a million window-panes flashed fire, and ten million little waves leaped up, shot through and through with shafts of rosy flame.

The broad bay quivered; steam from the waters still curled low among the waves; a streak of va-

pour belted a tall iron ship, towering up on the starboard bow of the incoming liner.

High in the thickets of mast and spar that fringed the city, the shore-fog spun its web of grey until the sun, pushing above the city's steel-ribbed palisades of masonry and brick, stripped the last vestiges of vapour from the harbour and set the floating films adrift from spar and mast and netted shroud.

Riding at anchor, steamer and ship, barque and brig, swung with the flood, every mast gilded, every rope a golden strand. At the city's feet, along an endless maze of water-fronts honeycombed with docks, the enormous funnels of the ocean liners loomed above the piers and bulkheads,—White-Star, Red-Star, Coaster, and Cunard,—and the tall black stacks of the Sound boats, rising over white pilot house and deck, cut the solid skyline tangle where thickets of masts, criss-crossed with rope and wire and spar, crowded the wharves like clinging growths of naked forests.

The gliding liner sheered northward ; the old red fort on her starboard bow flew a flag from the parapets, a banner that stood straight out in the bay breeze, blue union starred with white, folds running in brilliant ripples, white and crimson.

The single passenger on deck leaned on the rail of the moving liner, watching the great bronze shape flinging her bronze torch from the ocean to the skies. The sun turned her to a fire-brand. Every metal fold of her robe hung heavy and molten, luminous with prophecy, the undaunted proph-

ecy of dead sybils,—the terrible prophecy of living liberty.

A sweet bell tolled across the water; clear chimes echoed it from the deck of a white cruiser, anchored in mid-stream.

Slowly the great liner swung against her wharf; decks and gangways swarmed; pier and bulkhead and string-piece were alive.

There was shouting in the stony square outside the gates, the clatter of hoofs, the grinding din of wheels. Through the tumult and movement the crowd pressed, filing amid piles of luggage where the customs officers threaded their way, followed by porters staggering under leather baggage.

Out into the uproar of the echoing square surged the crowd where cabs and hacks and battered belt-line cars bore them to the four points of the compass. And with them went Oliver Lock, a stranger in his own land, where he possessed neither birth-right, heritage, nor a mess of pottage.

With the four winds for companions and the cobbler's horse to guide him, he looked out into the iron city with clear, young eyes untroubled by a doubt.

Above him something flapped like a gull in the sea-wind; it was the flag. High against the blue it fluttered, stars sparkling in the azure field, white and crimson blazonry blazing through the splendid sunlight.

CHAPTER II.

TWO MEN.

Treating of a Metropolis as seen from a horse-car, and introducing two people, one of whom rises superior to prejudice.

ABOUT half past six that morning Oliver Lock started on a hunt that was to last as long as he did—the hunt that will never end while the human race endures,—the “ Hunt for Happiness ! ” With that purpose in view he boarded a battered cross-town car, wondering where it might land him.

Childish memories of the city were too vague to serve him now ; the flat skyline, the thin brick skin of the city under which its gigantic bones of iron protruded in ribs and ridges and rusty scars, attracted and distracted him. To him, as yet, it was merely strange, not hideous. He wondered how a nation could so completely overlook the vital necessity of beauty,—he wondered *why* they had overlooked it.

He, a modern product, had passed his youth among the serene landmarks of an older civilisation, where symmetry was born with life itself, where moderation was the first law of beauty, and where beauty, beginning as a necessity to embryonic in-

telligence, grew to the dignity of a religion,—and left on mind and matter an impression ineffaceable.

Spontaneous and cheerful ugliness had never before presented itself to him as an actuality ; some things he found more beautiful than others. But ugliness enthroned, nay, glorified, ornamented, bedizened with sham and poverty, this was a new worship to him. He looked out into the city—a Pueblo wilderness of cubes, rank with neglect, rusty, plastered brick on brick—vistas of masonry, painted, palisaded, worm-holed with windows, blocks of granular brown stone, vast steel shells papered with yellow brick and stucco, painted iron masses riddled with windows,—everywhere windows, every roof and tower and spire peppered full of windows! windows! windows!—everywhere the brittle skin of brick and paint, and the colossal skeleton of iron, fish-ribbed, gigantic, as though under the whole city lay a fossil monster half exhumed, its million bones of iron rusting in their brick sarcophagi.

Into the mighty maze of dry cañons jingled the horse-car; steel rails glittered into perspective, steel gridironed steel, above, where sheaves of cables and telegraph wires sagged rusting in mid-air: below, where the iron patterns of car-rails crossed and curved and crossed again.

There was iron everywhere, endless tunnels of rust flaking under the weight of heavy little railroad trains rushing overhead, iron bones under every façade, iron on roof, on cupola, on tower.

The earth, the very air itself seemed to vibrate

with the thrill of steel, as though the arched sky still rang with the last hammer stroke that forged creation.

Sounds were no novelty to Oliver Lock; there are two kinds of sound, pleasant and unpleasant. But noise was new to him, the stupendous, interminable jarring, the amazing elimination of harmony in the accepted definition of the term, the monotonous repetition of endless repetitions of discord—insistent, dominant, hopeless noise, noise, noise!

He was no monger of problems, no passionless prober and prover of solutions. He had the normal man's disdain of statistics, and his healthy contempt for the human sponge. But he understood when he was in the presence of something tremendous; and he knew that force is never futile, fruitless, or causeless.

Face to face with a people of whom he was one, yet whom he had never known, face to face with the results of their existence, he stood alone, a stranger among his own, without aid, without advice, striving to comprehend his people and their works—a thing the people themselves had never attempted to comprehend.

The horse-car was dirty and dingy, the horses, staggering on down the iron rails, hung their rusty heads. Once the car stopped and a sweating man thrust a bucket of water under their noses, then flung the dregs into the hot street and hobbled away.

There were three passengers in the car, besides

Oliver; one, an old man, whom he never again saw; another, a girl dressed in mourning, the third, a young man in tweeds, smoking a pipe.

Oliver looked at the girl curiously, and looked away when her grey eyes met his. She was pretty in her black *crêpe*, and her gown was the sort of thing that attracts by its fit.

Presently the car stopped and she descended. Oliver saw her board another car going north.

It was six o'clock in the morning; the heat was intense; the air reeked with the smell of blistering paint, rusting iron, and that strange odour of millions of living creatures which hangs over great cities, differing enough to give every metropolis its individual and distinguishing essential smell.

White-clad helmeted men watered the street from iron excrescences on the sidewalk, or pursued a dusty road with broom and scraper, leaving a stench of the stable in their wake. Steam and smoke curled up through iron gratings on the sidewalks; at moments the heavy odour of malt and spirits hung in the air.

"Yet," thought Oliver, "if in the noise itself there is no harmony, it seems to strongly harmonise with the smells; and the combination is apparently in keeping with the whole wilderness of iron and brick and windows. There is harmony within the discord; city, sounds, odours, inhabitants bear to each other a certain balanced ratio and natural proportion;—as the smells are to the noise, so the architecture is to the inhabitants——"

“Upon my word,” thought Oliver smiling, “there’s a reason in anything that makes men frivolous. I wonder where this car is going!”

A moment later the car stopped; the conductor walked along the side platform reversing every seat, and the young man with the pipe alighted, apparently disturbed by the preparations that the driver was making to unhook his horses and rehook the traces to what had been the rear of the car.

Oliver picked up his two valises, hesitated, then looked inquiringly at the conductor.

“All out,” said the conductor; “Long Island Ferry.”

As Oliver stepped to the pavement, the young man with the pipe caught his eye. There was a moment’s mutual indecision, then they recognised each other by the slightest inclination of the head and a certain unamiable reserve peculiar to the Anglo-Saxon of both hemispheres.

It was clear to both young men that neither knew where they were going; this and the fact that they had seen each other on ship-board for a week without an effort toward human intercourse, made them indifferent, if not suspicious, to any advances. Yet the situation was becoming unpleasant; Oliver not only was ignorant of his own destination but also was engaged in killing time before he went there.

The young man with the pipe appeared equally undecided—even vaguely resentful. He smoked continually.

"I beg your pardon——" said Oliver, at last

"I beg yours——" said the young man with the pipe, as though intrusion on privacy was to be met with firmness.

"Would you," continued Oliver, "be so kind as to inform me where I could find boarding-houses?"

"Lodgings?" repeated the young man with the pipe, apparently relieved that Oliver had not mentioned seeing him on the voyage,—“lodgings?—well, upon my word, I cannot.”

"Thank you," said Oliver again, so pleasantly yet indifferently that the other, being an Englishman, lost any alarm he might have felt concerning attempts on his privacy.

The conductor, who was ringing violently at a nickel steel register in the back of the car, and contributing his share to the discord of the metropolis, looked down at the Englishman in a spasm of consideration called up to him: "I say, my good chap, where can a gentleman find respectable lodgings in town?"

"Hey?" inquired the conductor.

The Englishman repeated the question; the conductor gave the register crank a twist, slapped the glass cover on, locked it, rang the driver to go ahead, and then, apparently as an afterthought, called back something about Blackwell's Island, which information, although interesting, if not valuable, had a certain acrid tinge in its imparting, not far removed from derision.

There was a boy selling morning papers at the ferry gate ; the Englishman beckoned him, saying to Oliver : " I fancy they advertise lodgings,—there're bound to do it, you know."

Oliver for the third time thanked him, bought a paper, and began to turn the sheets, saying that he was shocked at his own ignorance of the customs of his country, that he had not been in America since he was a small boy, and that he began to wonder whether he deserved his privilege of citizenship.

The Englishman watched him, melting visibly all the time.

" I saw you aboard ship ; I fancy you saw me," he said, painfully conscious that he was inviting the advances of a stranger.

" Yes," replied Oliver ; " I recognised you."

The Englishman said " oh," and looked at the sky.

When Oliver found the column he wanted, another car had arrived, and the conductor was already reversing the seats, making his quota of predestined clatter.

" Conductor," said Oliver, " does your car pass Long Acre?"

" Take the cable—transfer—all aboard?" bawled the conductor, making more noise on a bell.

Oliver stared at him ; the Englishman, laughed, then said quickly ; " I'm in Long Acre myself—I don't mind showing you if you wish."

" You're very good," said Oliver, flinging his valises aboard, as the car, without stopping for him,

jingled out into the main track. "It seems to me everybody is inclined to hurry in this city."

"Fancy your being an American, now," said the Englishman; "but I dare say you wouldn't be flattered if you were taken for one of us, would you, now?"

"Oh, I'm resigned to anything," replied Oliver, laughing. The laugh took the sting out of his reply. "I've lived in Europe since I was twelve," he added, "and I'm thinking it was time ill spent if I'm to live the rest of my life among my own people."

At Broadway the car stopped; the conductor handed Oliver two yellow transfer slips, saying: "North-bound cable only—step lively, please!"

"Confound their impudence," said Oliver, climbing aboard a cable-car; "I never was so hustled about in my life."

"Step lively!" shouted the conductor of the cable-car. There was a jerk, a creak, and the car slid forward and glided on up the polished vista of steel, following hundreds of other cars similarly painted, followed by hundreds of others, and passed by hundreds more.

"This is Broadway," observed the Englishman; "you knew it, I dare say."

Oliver knew it. Far up the ravine of masonry and iron, a beautiful spire, blue in the distance, rose from a gothic church that seemed to close the great thoroughfare at its northern limit.

"That's Grace Church," said Oliver, with a little catch in his voice.

It was the first familiar landmark that he had found in the city of his boyhood—and he had been away only a dozen years. Suddenly he realised the difference between a city, in the Old-World acceptance of the term, and the city before his eyes—this stupendous excrescence of naked iron, gaunt under its skin of paint, flimsily colossal, ludicrously sad ;—this half-begun, irrational, gaudy, dingy monstrosity,—this temporary fair-ground choked with tinsel, ill-paved, ill-lighted, stark, treeless, swarming, crawling with humanity.

“The air is stifling,” said the Englishman politely ; “it’s these sky-scrapers.”

Oliver turned in all the sensitiveness of new loyalty to his monster mother.

“I am not aware,” he said, “that New York heat differs from the heat of any other city.”

“Oh, you’ll be aware of it when you’ve lived here as long as I have,” observed the Englishman, much amused. “‘Give me hell for comfort,’ said the devil, ‘but our main office is in New York’—I beg your pardon—I hope you are not offended.”

“No,” said Oliver, laughing, “you’re more American than I am at present ; I’ll have to vote before I feel at liberty to enjoy a thin skin.”

“By the way,” continued Oliver, “it’s really very friendly of you to pilot me ; my name is Oliver Lock.”

“Mine is Duncan Weyward ;—and I say,—if it’s not offensively personal—why did you ride about in that cross-town car ? ”

“Because,” said Oliver, “it was too early in the morning to ring lodging-house door bells, and I had no other place to go. By the way—if it’s not impertinent,—you seemed to be riding at random yourself.”

“Rather,” said Weyward; “I’ve lost my door-key and there’s nobody to open before seven.”

CHAPTER III.

THE LONELY CITY.

Relating among other things how Oliver found an arm-chair to sleep in and what he saw when he awaked.

"So this is Long Acre," repeated Oliver, standing still on the waste of hot asphalt and scanning the featureless flat rank of grey stone houses on the western boundary.

"Yes," said Weyward, gloomily; "this is Long Acre."

"I wonder," said Oliver, a trifle depressed, "where Mrs. Wyvern's boarding-house is."

"It's over my office—it's a flat—are you going there?" asked Weyward, curiously.

"Depends on terms," replied Oliver; "what sort of a place is it?"

They walked across the asphalt, Oliver carrying his two valises, Weyward refilling his pipe.

"I don't know," said Weyward; "before I went over to London in April I heard that a Mrs. Wyvern had rented two stories above me. Wait—here's my compound—the door's open—come in, won't you?"

He entered the lower door, turned to the right, unlocked another door, stepped into the musty room, and flung open all three windows.

"Stuffy, isn't it? I've been away since April.

Come in, Mr. Lock," he repeated ; " smells like a mouse-trap, doesn't it ? You wouldn't try a cocktail, now, would you—or split a Schwepps and a pony ? You'll find dust on the chairs, I fancy—where the deuce is that cork-screw ? "

Oliver deposited his valises and looked around. The room—or rather suite of three rooms running back to the rear—was furnished in old carved oak, dark enough to take those beautiful purple highlights on sculptured corners, and to which dust only gave a bloom like the down on a plum.

There was much silver there, much Flemish glass, a rug or two, one gorgeous golden tapestry, and many, many slippers, all women's foot-gear, some antique, some modern,—slippers from Spain with red heels, slippers from Paris with gilt heels, slippers from Japan, Turkey, Italy.

" No," said Weyward, looking up from the floor, where he was rummaging for bottles, " I'm not in shoes—I sell bath-tubs. Beg your pardon for leaving you ; I must get some ice around the corner."

He went out, nodding pleasantly, and leaving the hall door ajar. Oliver read on the small black square of metal, just below the knob :

D. WEYWARD,
Agent for SPIGOTT, FASSETT & Co.,
LONDON.

The office, as Weyward called it, was certainly a most delightfully unbusiness-like office.

There were neither desks nor samples nor files nor framed notices ; and besides, the farthest room was unmistakably a bed-room, and a luxurious one, too.

Weyward returned with a lump of ice and sat down on a carved chest to crack it and shake it in a silver freezer.

“ Now you’re wondering what that second room is—aren’t you, Mr. Lock ? ” he said, rattling the ice and catching up a silver strainer, once used by somebody’s great, great grandmother to strain her harmless East India tea.

“ It’s a music room—isn’t it ? ” asked Oliver.

“ Why, yes,” replied Weyward a little blankly—“ or rather a chamber of silence. I’ve a mania for collecting musical instruments—but the devil of it is I can only play a drum. But I love to play it,” he added.

“ A drum ? ” repeated Oliver ; but Weyward was so serious he dared not laugh.

“ Yes—many don’t like it. I do—I can’t help it—the roll of a drum always did fascinate me. It’s my only musical relaxation ; I have no ear.”

Oliver said he was surprised to hear that.

“ It’s a fact—I have absolutely no ear for a tune—but I have a gift of rhythm and I use it on my drum.”

He handed Oliver a slender glass, took another himself, filled both with an amber liquid that frosted the dainty stems, and said with the painful solemnity that the rite entailed among Anglo-Saxons of a century ago—

"A glass with you, sir—I have the honour—"

"The honour is mine—with pleasure," replied Oliver.

There was a quaint courtesy in Weyward's manner with his glass, noticeable particularly as coming from one of the unclassed.

"Come into the studio—if you care to see some things," said Weyward, affably.

The studio walls were hung with musical instruments, rare specimens from early centuries, strange modern examples from Arabia, China, Africa and the South Seas. In sealed cabinets lay violins; a grand piano, a harpsichord, a clavier, gilded harps, even a xylophone stood ranged against the walls.

Weyward picked up a piffero pipe, produced a melancholy blast from it, and laid it down.

"Probably distressed you, didn't it, Mr. Lock? I have no ear—it sounded well enough to me."

"But," said Oliver, "doesn't anybody ever play any of these? It seems a pity—that violin—it's a Stradivarius—do you know it?"

"Oh, yes, I know it," replied Weyward, "and to me it sounds as much like other fiddles as one cat with his interior intact sounds like another. But I love to look at all these things—it's a keen pleasure. If I didn't hate professional musicians so I'd have concerts—indeed I would."

He neglected to say that his prejudice did not include amateurs of the fairer sex.

"Well," said Oliver, "you have been very kind to a houseless pilgrim; believe me, I appreciate

your hospitality ; I wish I had met you on the steamer."

"So do I," replied Weyward ; "and if you must go, just look in when you have time to kill. I'm always assaulting the poor old chap."

He went to the door with Oliver and pointed out the stairway to Mrs. Wyvern's two apartments.

"Hope you'll find comfortable quarters above ; look me up, Mr. Lock ; I'm alone a good bit."

"Indeed I will," said Oliver, pleasantly ; and, valises in hand, he started up the crimson velvet stairway.

There was a small electric button in the door above ; Oliver pushed it, and, almost at the same instant, a very blonde woman, stout and rather young, opened the door, bringing with her a Mexican hairless dog and a strong aroma of coffee.

"What is it you wish, sir ? " she asked, looking at him through her gold eye-glasses.

"I should like to see Mrs. Wyvern," said Oliver ; "I believe she rents rooms."

"Come in," said the woman, decisively. "Turn to the right, please ; I am Mrs. Wyvern. Would you like to look at rooms ? "

She sat down on a gilded sofa ; the Mexican hairless dog hopped up beside her. The dog was blue, over fed, horrible.

Oliver glanced at its bulging apoplectic eyes, its hideous slaty skin, naked and wrinkled.

"What are the prices for rooms ; I wish for nothing expensive," said Oliver.

Mrs. Wyvern looked at him sharply; the blue dog crawled into her lap. She was a woman of forty, stout, gowned in black silk that fitted—if the set of a garment stretched over the body like a second epidermis may be called a fit. She had china-blue eyes, a regular, almost baby face, in which there was a serenity that betokened much of good or much mischief. There was a flush of colour in each cheek, a slight tendency to fatness behind the ears, but her nose and chin were modelled on fine lines. Her hair, worn with Grecian severity, was curly and very, very blonde.

“What do you call expensive?” asked Mrs. Wyvern, abruptly.

“What I cannot afford,” said Oliver, smiling.

Mrs. Wyvern looked up again, then busied herself with settling the bells on the blue dog’s collar.

“This is merely an apartment, you understand,” she said. “Perhaps you mistook it for a boarding-house.”

“Perhaps I did,” said Oliver, not exactly liking the expression in the blue dog’s eyes; “and I will not detain you, Mrs. Wyvern.”

He rose and picked up one valise; Mrs. Wyvern sat still.

“Of course you could take your meals outside,” she said.

“No,” said Oliver, “I don’t care to do that.”

“All my guests do,” observed Mrs. Wyvern; “please step this way.”

He thought she was showing him out, but she

turned to the left and opened a door of a bed-room facing the square.

"Would you care for that room?" she asked.

The room was pleasant; a small bath-room opened from it; all was in the best of order.

"What is the rent?" asked Oliver, inclined to back out anyway, partly because the blue dog came jingling his bells into the room, partly because he didn't like to be coerced into taking anything, partly, perhaps, because of Mrs. Wyvern's placid, china-blue eyes.

"This is summer; I have very few guests," she said. "You may rent it until October." And she mentioned a price that was reasonable.

"I serve coffee and fruit in the morning," she added. The blue dog jingled corroboration.

Oliver thought for a while; it was the neighbourhood of Weyward that outweighed the blue dog, and the china-blue eyes of Mrs. Wyvern.

"I'll take it," said Oliver, dropping both valises with a sigh of relief at one problem the less to solve.

When he looked up again Mrs. Wyvern and the blue dog had disappeared. Oliver threw himself into an arm-chair and stared out across the hot square. He was tired; the fatigue of the solid land after a week of ocean motion made him drowsy.

There were cable-cars gliding through the square at intervals; a few hansoms rolled past over the soft, hot asphalt. Under a big lamp-post crowned with sprawling bronze arms, a policeman in drab helmet,

blue serge blouse, and white cotton gloves, stood juggling with his short club. Occasionally he spat upon the sidewalk.

At the northern extremity of the Long Acre stood a yellow building from which a red flag hung bearing the legend, "Auction To-day." Above it a sign proclaimed that the Salvation Army would hold hallelujah pops until further notice.

The eastern section of the square appeared to be given over to small shops, save where the long cross streets pierced it at right angles and set out their frontier posts of brown stone in protest against the encroachments of commerce. The southern and eastern angle of the Long Acre terminated in a great pile of discoloured lime-stone, yellow brick and iron, shapeless, depressing.

The movement of the cable-cars wearied Oliver. He looked at the lamp-post; its sprawling clusters resembled the legs of an overturned crab on a clothes-post.

Five minutes later he was sleeping in his arm-chair; and when, after a long, long time, he awakened, the red sunset, reflected from the windows opposite, slanted in bars across his ceiling.

As he stood up, yawning and rubbing his eyes, something stirred behind him; and he turned, and saw a young girl, in black, with grey eyes and pale lips, smiling faintly her excuse for the intrusion:

"I came to bring towels—I am sorry I disturbed you—my mother has no maid in summer—I am Dulcie Wyvern."

There was a moment's silence; the sunlight slowly filled the room, lighting it to a saffron glow. Gradually the illumination waned; on wall and ceiling the red rays paled and faded out, leaving corners full of shadows that spread an arabesque of patterns across the floor.

She had already gone, leaving behind her a faint freshness in the dusk.

He walked to the door. Somewhere in the house he heard the jingle of the blue dog. The shadows on his ceiling grew greyer; the gong of a cable-car outside sounded, repeated by another car, in minor intervals, almost musical.

As he started to make his toilet, he looked about him at the darkened room.

The curtains of twilight hung heavy through the heat; in the smothered stillness he heard his watch ticking.

The flat shadows, the silence stifled him; a dull weight settled with the descending night; and when he shook it from his brow it sank into his heart; silence, sadness, shadow, muffled, impenetrable.

Suddenly he turned, a clear voice in his ears—but it was only an echo of his fancy. Shadows are ghosts of the sun; sound has its ghosts, echoes that haunt lonely ears, whispering to lonely hearts.

He went noiselessly down the stairs and out into the pale gaslight, where a waste of polished asphalt reflected the yellow lamp rays or glimmered white under the electric lights.

His path lay somewhere through the half-lighted clefts and bricked gorges of the city ; he followed the roaring cañon of Broadway because of the roar and movement. Somewhere down there, deep in the dry-baked ravine of masonry and iron, he would follow the four winds until they blew him through the gaslight and shadow into some caravansary where he could eat, and rest, and go his way.

Clocks with great illuminated dials stared at him from the gutter-curb ; lighted shop windows, crossed and recrossed by silhouettes, lined the sidewalk.

Above, in the thick air, a smouldering radiance kindled in the haze, through which, far up between the black cliffs of iron, a little misshapen moon, battered and tarnished, hung like a muddy silver drop in a spider's web.

Signs flared out, outlined in incandescent globules ; globes of arc-lights, white and trembling, spread moving shapes upon the sidewalk around which magnified shadows of winged creatures danced, and disappeared, quivering into view again only to dissolve among the rings of graded light and shade that spread like ripples in a pool across the pavement.

Dark blocks of great commercial houses succeeded blocks of theatres and hotels bathed in the light of signs and coloured clusters ; there were letters of light arched over theatres, legends of light labelling music-halls and hotels, dark structures towered with lights, tall shapes of shade hung with single lamps, misty skeletons of shadow spiriting

light through every rib, vast masses of lighted windows, tier on tier, framed with spectral outlines of masonry.

Out from the darkness, shot and smeared with light, the round yellow eyes of the cable cars stared, passed, and went out, leaving a tiny red or blue lantern glimmering good-bye behind. And out of the swarming, crawling depths of the kindling ravine a ceaseless ringing rumour rose to the skies.

Night and day the city vibrates from tower to sewer, from spire to subway, from its skies to the deep, black, earthy depths, down under the rock of its foundations. It is the steady shock of machinery intoning an iron monotone; it is the undertone of living force chaining the forces of land and sea; it is the groaning of an iron people in iron depths, moving the whole world upon their shoulders, a living pedestal of earth and bone and blood for the iron goddess with the flaming torch.

Out of the blue gloom in the east a church-bell tolled above the hushed avenue; the sullen roar of a loaded train across iron trestles drowned it; there came a rush of steam, the piercing creak of rusty brakes, a silence, filled with the shuffle of worn shoes on pavements worn to their heated beds.

An iron tunnel, a stark steel shell, crusted with rust, blotched with greasy paint that flaked from rusty bolted uprights and filthy girders, choked an avenue stretching southward into the night. Through the tunnel whizzed electric cars, over the

tunnel's roof tore loaded trains with little heavy locomotives wreathed in steam and car after car gliding after, flashing ranks and ranks of lighted windows, until the last car passed with a hiss from the air brakes and the red signal lamp grew to a spark, glimmered, then vanished as another train rolled in, steaming, shaking the whole tunnel with its grinding wheels.

And, deep in the city's iron cleft, creeping through the dull glow, lost in crowded ways, lost in deserted squares, passed Oliver Lock, haunting the human pack, through the immense loneliness of the city, where on the right hand a thousand pass nor turn aside and ten thousand on the left are passing; figures that move from darkness to light, and from the light again to darkness, pale faces with eyes of shadow, shadowy faces with pale eyes, the ghosts of voices, words half caught, left ringing in the ears, meaningless, sadder than sighs.

On he went, depressed by the increasing loneliness of strange streets!—where the sun and the moon and the light of the stars are darkened and the doors in the dwellings are closed; where strange eyes look, seeing nothing, where strange laughter sounds suspicious; where the throngs hasten on their ways and the stranger knows not why nor where.

CHAPTER IV.

NIGHT AND DAY.

A chapter ending with a ray of light.

THE heat slowly increased ; cloudless days slipped into brief, breathless nights, leaving on his tired brain aching impressions of miles of streets glaring in hopeless sunlight, of roofs and chimneys clean cut against intense blue skies, of summer stars drowned in the depths of hot midnights that smothered earth and air in a shadowless purple sea.

The white dawn brought no breath ; the steel-grey shadows of masonry and brick shrank as the sun crept up, then quivered and lengthened, crawling across hot pavements, across dry gutters, stealing over stony squares, till the red cinders kindling in the west flung crimson sparks on every window and the dense cross-streets, from river to river, smouldered in fiery shadow.

Then the grey haze, rising from dock and pier, dimmed the last stain on the horizon, and all light faded, until, through twilight falling, the white electric lamps snapped alight and a million ghostly gas jets outlined the black city in squares and lines and angles, reflecting the great signs and arcs of the star-lit constellations.

With dusk the tense drawn cord of life relaxed, and the iron city slumbered, fitfully, moaning in its sleep: with dawn the cord grew tense again and the deep hum started in the city's heart, increasing, growing, roaring through its arteries—ringing skyward to the zenith, vibrating from the Palisades to the sea.

And Oliver went about to sell his wares.

All day long the tired throngs trudged the streets, going, coming, through the glare; up and down, up and down moved cars and cabs and trucks and drays. The heavy little engines on the Elevated rushed north and south over miles and miles of scorching streets, and their parched steam-brakes hissed with the hissing surf on the southern sea-wall, and their ashes dropped in the northern stream running to meet flood-tide from the Hudson to the Sound.

And Oliver travelled north and south.

But all the floods that washed the reeking flanks of the city could not cool it; the North River foamed along the Battery, pushing and piling wave on wave into the Hudson, the East River swirled through the docks, swinging a heavy tide athwart the Sound, the Spuyten Duyvil surged into the Harlem, curling under its swinging steel bridges—but the iron roots of the city blistered among the dry rock, and its iron-capped spires blistered under the sun.

In the streets the strife for life, renewed at every dawn, grew into a struggle for breath. In the long

gridiron of the metropolitan desert, the endless avenues from north to south were still running with the sands of life, but the thousand streets that cross-barred them from east to west were silent, horridly silent, save at sundown, when the human swarm crawled out, craving darkness and the stars and silence.

And, at evening, Oliver Lock, among the millions, crept to the roofs, looking out at the yellow lights in the harbour with sick eyes,—he who had entered the city alone, armed with youth, he who had gone into its clefts and ravines to ask for the right to live. His voice had been lost in the iron din; he passed from the eyes and the memory of those within the walls; none remembered even to forget him, he was so lost, so meaningless, so dead where helplessness is death, where power alone is life.

The lighted disk of a clock-dial hung in the black southwest; he watched its changeless face until a bell in the north sounded for midnight.

Then he looked out over the vast encircling city, where millions fought for the sleep that the heated sky denied, where in the darkness around him men were dying as he looked, where there were births, too, even as he stood there, somewhere deep under the blackness and shadow.

If he felt bitterness it was not because the right to live had been refused him by those who trade to live themselves—by those who give when they want and who refuse to give when their own de-

sire is assuaged. It was because what he had to give was worth nothing to them, that his wares were useless to men.

In that ocean of troubled silence—that black ocean below him, under which black streets crossed streets of shadow and spaces of shapeless shade concealed ten thousand breathing men, there was not one place for him to sit and work among the million workers, to work knowing that what he did would end in trade and keep the life within him alive for other work.

Into the universe of merchants with their merchandise he had been born to fashion merchandise as well as they ; and he had come to the city with wares that no man understood or wanted.

So, if he could not make anything, and if he could not idly stand and watch the strife for life, what was left ?

He turned and struck the brick wall behind him with his clenched hand and shook his bleeding, naked fist at the ocean of shadow.

Then he felt his way to the ladder and descended deep into the silent house, ashamed, penitent, wondering what the end would be.

“There must be room for me—there *must* be,” he said to himself ; “it is my own land—there must be room.”

He entered his dark chamber and felt for the bed. On it lay a thick pile of papers—his book.

“I don’t know—I don’t know where to turn,” he said, staring about in the darkness.

Somebody in the outer hallway opened a door, flooding his room with light.

"Are you ill—I thought I heard you call," whispered Dulcie Wyvern.

"No, I am not ill," he said, wondering that in all the world anybody should ask or care.

"Then—good-night," said Dulcie Wyvern.

"Good-night—and thank you."

There came a faint response—the soft noise of a door closing—and darkness.

CHAPTER V.

THE PEDDLER OF WORDS.

Describing how Oliver rushed in where authors fear to tread.

A SUNDAY of sunlit silence had driven him to bed at sun-down, supperless, stifling with the necessity of something to do. He rose next morning and sat, thinking, by the window, until the jingle of the bells on the blue dog warned him that Mrs. Wyvern was on her way with his coffee.

He opened the door for her; she placed the tray on his table and bade him good-morning in a manner which always seemed pleasant until he encountered her eyes behind the gold eye-glasses.

There were two letters and a long envelope on his tray. He had expected no mail; he had sent a manuscript to Klaw, but an answer within a fortnight from the great publisher was more than he had dared look for.

"There is another note; I am requested to deliver it," said Mrs. Wyvern, holding out a violet-tinted envelope in her plump, ringed fingers.

He thanked her and laid it with the other mail.

"Is the room satisfactory, Mr. Lock?" asked Mrs. Wyvern, taking the blue dog into her arms.

"Entirely," he replied; "I regret that I am obliged to leave it next week."

She hesitated, looking at him with near-sighted eyes.

"I see you are interested in the publishing business," she said. There was in her voice the faintest trace of interest; she was looking at the imprint on the long envelope—"The Klaw Publishing Company."

"Yes," he said, nervously, "I am interested in publishers—more or less. I expect to make a living with their aid, and help them to make one by mine."

"Have you met Mr. Dawson Klaw, Mr. Lock?" she inquired, with the nearest-sighted smile he had yet noticed. She always made him uncomfortable, yet she was agreeable to look at, even attractive in her plump, fresh-skinned type, almost pretty in spite of the vague blue eyes—nay, the eyes themselves were perilously close to a dewy sort of beauty—had there not been, deep in the pupils, an unaccountable fixedness.

"I have never met Mr. Dawson Klaw," said Oliver.

There was a slight change in Mrs. Wyvern's face—an imperceptible relaxation of her eyebrows. A moment later she went out with the blue dog.

Oliver, pouring his coffee, heard the door close, then his abstracted eyes returned to the long envelope on the table. The imprint, with the well-known three-headed parrot, fascinated him—he had seen it in books ever since he could remember; he rec-

collected somebody saying that the three brothers, Dawson, Rogueby and Magnelius Klaw, had been photographed for the parrots' heads—an ill-natured remark as well as a stupid one.

No, he would not allow that long envelope to spoil his appetite; he would not touch it until after breakfast. Not that he doubted what it contained; unexpected happiness is quite as bad for the appetite as sudden sorrow.

His hand was not steady as he lifted the cream jug. How good they had been to read his manuscript and take it—for they had not sent it back—the long envelope was much too small to contain all he had written for the Klaws to publish—the three brothers—Dawson, Rogueby and Magnelius Klaw!

He was too excited to eat; he scarcely touched the buttered rolls and the melon; the coffee burnt his mouth.

But he would not open the parcel; he pretended that he needed self discipline. He was very happy.

And, after a long while, during which he had eaten nothing, he found out the real reason why he had not opened the long envelope. He was afraid.

When he thoroughly understood that, he picked up the envelope. It was heavy; there were several stamps on it. But it could not be his rejected manuscript, "The Winged Boy."

He opened it; there was a type-written set of verses inside and a slip of paper. The slip was partly printed, partly filled in with ink:

"The Klaw Publishing Company regret that they

do not find *Miss Violet Highlands*' [written in ink] manuscript available for publication and beg to return the same with thanks.

“ Dawson Klaw [written]

“ per A. B. C. [written] ”

He stared blankly at the poem signed “ Violet Highlands ” : then examined the envelope. It was directed to him.

The miserable certainty that there had been an error, that a stranger's manuscript had been returned to him by mistake, was no consolation. Clearly his own manuscript, “ The Winged Boy,” was now in the possession of Miss Violet Highlands, whoever she might be—rejected !

The error embittered the disappointment ; there was a sick sensation in his breast as he returned the poem and slip to the long envelope. After a moment he resolutely picked up the letters.

The first envelope contained the advertisement of a Broadway tailor, couched in sartorial language, respectfully suggesting plunges into credit and coats of many colours.

He flung it into the fire-place.

The second letter was a line from Weyward regretting that Oliver had not looked him up “ down stairs,” and requesting the pleasure of his company at ten that evening.

Still smarting under disappointment, deeply hurt because of the carelessness of the Klaw, he tossed Weyward's note aside and opened the violet-tinted envelope.

He read the note twice in grim displeasure :

“ MONDAY.

“ DEAR MR. LOCK :—

“ Your lovely story came to me by mistake and I guess that horrid old Klaw sent you my poem. I shall die if you read it. Won't you bring it to me at five o'clock?

“ Sincerely yours,

“ VIOLET HIGHLANDS.

“ (*Apartment 9.*) ”

Presently he leaned back and touched the electric button behind him, then laid the note on the table, frowning.

It was Dulcie Wyvern who came in with a shy good-morning and that pale, pretty smile he had come to know.

“ I beg your pardon for disturbing you,” he said, “ but is there a Miss Violet Highlands staying here? ”

The grey eyes opened a trifle wider; the smile changed.

“ Yes ; Miss Highlands, Miss Tring and Miss McNair have apartment nine.”

“ Is Miss Highlands at home ? ”

“ No,” said the girl, uncertainly.

She waited a moment, turning the handle of the door, serious face lowered, then started to go.

“ When may I see Miss Highlands? ” asked Oliver, abruptly.

She looked up, her pale face faintly tinged with colour. Oliver repeated the question.

"Did she not ask you to come at five?" inquired Dulcie.

He nodded, wondering how she knew that.

The blue dog came tinkling along the hallway. Dulcie eyed it scornfully and said: "Go away, Dawson."

"I thought you were fond of it," said Oliver, picking up his hat.

"No, I am not," replied Dulcie; "I cannot see why Mama keeps such a dog as Dawson."

"It's probably valuable," said Oliver, amused. "What a name,—Dawson!"

"I never before saw one without hair," observed Dulcie, turning up her nose; "we had a dog in Montreal," she added, "such a dog!—higher than that!—" She held out one hand very high, but, being truthful by instinct, lowered it after a slight hesitation, as a concession to conscience and a tribute to possibility.

"In Montreal," repeated Oliver, lingering in the dim hallway.

"Yes, indeed; in Nôtre Dame. Not that Dawson kind of dog. We wouldn't have Dawson in Nôtre Dame."

"Your school?" asked Oliver.

"Yes. I have not been home before in years. I came to New York last Christmas."

"Are you going back to Nôtre Dame?"

"No. Once I wished to take the veil—but I was ignorant—oh, you can't imagine! The world is too exciting—I had no idea what good times people had in the world. Still——"

She twisted her hands thoughtfully and looked at Oliver.

"Still?" repeated Oliver.

"Well—I loved the Sisters—all except one—and I did try to love her—and they are so quiet. There in Nôtre Dame—there is peace—But I have good times here—I'm going to have one to-night—hush!—if Mama knew——"

"Dulcie!" came a clear, passionless voice from the hall to the left. The blue dog tinkled nearer.

"Yes, Mama," she answered; "do you want Dawson?"

He caught her swift glance; her eyes gave him a shy leave-taking as he turned toward the stairway.

Weyward, who stood by the street door examining a bunch of keys, looked up as Oliver descended.

"Hello," he called out cheerfully, "are you coming to hear me play the drum to-night?"

"Of course," replied Oliver, smiling. "Ten o'clock, I believe?"

"Ten sharp; you will come, won't you now?"

Oliver said yes.

Weyward mentioned that a month or more had passed without Oliver's appearance.

"By the way," he said, "would you consider it impertinent if I should ask you something personal?"

"I can tell you when you ask it," replied Oliver laughing.

“Why, then—you go in for—er—literature, don’t you?”

“I certainly do,” said Oliver; “who told you?”

If Weyward heard the question he did not answer; and Oliver said: “I never have published anything—I’m beginning.”

“With a knock-out,” added Weyward, incautiously.

Oliver reddened and Weyward, whose intentions had been of the best, cursed himself for the blunder.

He said frankly: “I knew that Klaw had returned a manuscript of yours and I was devilish sorry. Don’t consider me a prying beast—I only knew you seemed to be without backers and—and I thought—perhaps—if you would let me be of use to you——”

He was quite upset by Oliver’s annoyance; he certainly had made a mess of it.

“See here,” he said, “I’ve seen more of this city than you have and it’s hell for the stranger!”

Oliver had cooled his tender skin by this time, although Weyward’s knowledge of his disappointment still stung.

“I don’t care for help,” he said; “if the city is hell it suits me; I’m here to raise hell on my own account.”

Weyward looked so hurt that Oliver assured him he was not offended.

“You’ll see I’m right,” said Weyward; “that manuscript should have been taken—and, by Jove, it’s fine!”

"You didn't read it?" asked Oliver in amazement.

"Read it! Didn't I? I sat up over it—and when I finished and looked for the author's name—and found it was you——"

"Where the devil did you get my manuscript?" demanded Oliver irritably.

Weyward's excitement subsided; he looked at Oliver and jingled his keys.

"Let the tabby jump that time, didn't I?" he said with the ghost of a grin.

"Yes," said Oliver, "you got it from a Miss Violet Highlands. Who is she, Weyward?"

"You won't ask me to-morrow," replied Weyward with another grin. "Come, don't be ungenerous, for it wasn't her fault. Her mail comes to my place—I mean her literary mail, and I open it. She wrote you, didn't she?"

"Yes," said Oliver, puzzled.

"Well, you have her rejected verses. I fancy you'll forgive her when you see her. You're going to see her at five, I believe."

Oliver, still puzzled, and seriously inclined to resent the participation of people in his private affairs, said that he himself had not felt at liberty to read Miss Highlands' verses. He added something about a decent respect for privacy which nettled Weyward.

"Privacy! My dear fellow, have you come to New York for privacy?"

He laughed immediately, however, and contin-

ued: "I know a good thing, and I know that good things stand no better chance than bad things unless backed and pushed. I haven't a pull but it's odds to a penny I can put you in the way of several. Let me do it; you are going to delay success unless somebody beats a drum for you. You won't do it yourself—you are not that kind; you write because you know how; publishers publish because they don't know how. And when they hear the bass-drum they follow it like the rats after the pied-piper."

Weyward's handsome face was quite red by this time; he flourished his keys, jingling defiance to all who might gainsay him.

He said: "You've never troubled yourself to call on me since our first meeting—which was a bit ungracious, now, wasn't it? Odds to a penny you'd never have come to see me if I hadn't written you—now, would you?"

"I've been very busy," said Oliver, "things have not turned out well—and—really, Weyward, I haven't had the heart for it and that's a fact."

The kindness of this young Englishman touched him, the more keenly, perhaps, because of the morning's false hopes and chagrin.

He had not gone to see Weyward, partly because he had no heart for anything after a month of disappointment, partly because his money was nearly gone and he would not accept hospitality that he could not return.

Probably Weyward suspected that something

had gone wrong in Oliver's bank, for he was wearing his winter clothes, in the hottest city on earth,—well-cut, faultless clothes, to be sure—but enough to start the perspiration on Weyward's forehead at the idea.

"Why the devil," said Weyward abruptly, "can't you be more friendly?"

Oliver laughed and said they should be.

"Then come in and we'll have a cocktail—and you won't mind if I tell you all about your own business, will you now?"

Oliver went in, glad of a seat in a friendly man's house, tired of a quest that was proving more hopeless day by day.

There was no bloom of dust on the carved oak now; silver and glass sparkled; the sun fell on golden tapestry lighting the long room with mellow reflections.

The comfort of the still, cool rooms rested him; he watched Weyward busy with the silver shaker and the ancestral strainer. The weight on his tired lids relaxed; the straight, anxious crease smoothed out between his brows.

Weyward's collection of slippers on their ebony shelves, carefully dusted, amused him. He fancied there had been a few modern additions.

It was early morning yet; still he felt that heavy fatigue that the heated dawn brings in the iron city. Care had already touched his eyes with shadow; his body seemed tired—as though he had passed through sickness.

But he was not yet hopelessly sick at heart ; he was convinced that somebody would publish his books. It was not dismay, not even panic at the few dollars left, only a hurt surprise at rebuffs, a wonder that he could find no opening, no foothold anywhere. But it was absurd to think that there was no room for him or his books.

If he felt tired and depressed at evening it was perhaps the heat, the strangeness, the physical distress of walking—for he could not afford carfare now—perhaps his winter clothes were reasons for headaches, sleepless nights, and that sudden exhaustion that the mornings brought. He had been obliged to economise on food, too—perhaps his nervous fatigue came from that—his fits of fierce resentment—as when he had struck the hot brick wall with naked knuckles.

He had managed, however, to keep himself fairly well groomed ; his grey winter clothes appeared suitable for summer, too, unless one examined them closely ; his hat was spotless, his linen immaculate. That was why he found it necessary to cut down on restaurant bills.

He lay back in the broad, carved chair, quietly enjoying the comfort that brief relaxation from the strain of the strife for life brought to him ; contented to rest for a few moments under a friendly man's roof.

“ A glass with you, my dear fellow—I have the honour—”

Weyward's quaint, formal voice roused him from

an apathy that bordered closely on slumber. They touched glasses.

"As you were saying," began Weyward, "you have met the enemy and you are theirs."

Oliver had been saying nothing of the kind. However, he assented to the accuracy of Weyward's statement by silence. And Weyward proceeded:

"Your romance of 'The Winged Boy' is good—good enough to anger the public, unless you had a name. In that event publishers would scramble for it. This is unjust, but it's so. Justice is long-armed; publishers are long-eared, and a wisp of hay in their mouths produces the desired bray of pleasure where a whack with a stick wielded by the long arms of Justice would invite kicking and stampedes. Do you follow me?"

"Indeed I do," replied Oliver, smiling.

"Good; I make bath-tubs sometimes, sometimes metaphors; Byron took baths in bigger tubs and made better epigrams, such as,

"Now Barabbas was a Publisher—"

"Don't you think that epigram rather cheap? I like yours better," said Oliver.

"Can't accept bouquets at my friend Byron's expense," replied Weyward; "odds to a penny he'd have said the same about me. What! Oh, I say, don't refuse another glass now. Stay by me; I can talk better with a glass in my hand."

They touched glasses formally.

"As you were saying," continued Weyward,

airily, "the pull's the thing! And," he added, gravely, "you are perfectly correct."

Oliver frowned, then smiled.

Weyward brought his well-shaped hand down on his chair with a slap.

"That's the idea! A pull! A pull! My dear fellow, your logic overcomes me!"

"I didn't say anything to deserve such admiration," said Oliver, laughing; "and I'm not looking for pulls, as you call them."

He rose, adding that it was late and he had business down town.

"Oh, I say," blurted out Weyward, "let me ask you questions, won't you?"

Oliver, much amused, said certainly, and the young Englishman began a rapid-fire battery of questions and cross-examination which sometimes annoyed Oliver and sometimes made him laugh outright.

Yet there was no mistaking Weyward's single-minded sincerity; it was plain that he had taken a genuine liking to Oliver and intended to make himself useful in spite of the other's reserve and disapproval.

His questions were parried or unanswered, but what he drew from Oliver confirmed his suspicions that Oliver was down on his luck, and, being gently bred, could neither beat the bass-drum in his own honour nor set anybody else doing it for him.

"I'll beat it myself then," thought Weyward; "I fancy it won't hurt the bath-tub crop."

"Then," said Oliver, moving toward the door, "I am to come this evening. You say there may be a few people?"

"There *may* be a few," replied Weyward, carelessly.

He went with Oliver to the street door.

"Remember," he said, "ten o'clock sharp. I suppose you are going to see some of your ratty publishers this afternoon?"

"Yes, if they'll see me," said Oliver, with the faintest trace of bitterness.

"Got 'em all down?" inquired Weyward.

Oliver handed him his note book, asking him to suggest any others he might think of.

Weyward glanced at the column:

The Kestrel Press Co.,	. . .	Fulton Street,
Klaw Brothers & Co.,	. . .	Gramercy Park,
Wallowby Sons,	St. John's Place,
Chudley, Skipp, and Fleeter,		Madison Square, S.,
Weems Co.,	Broadway,
Salmi Cheedle,	Battery Square,
Fox, Kite, and Jakel,	. . .	Herald Square.

"You have never been to see Klaw or Salmi Cheedle?" asked Weyward, returning the note book.

"No. I sent them my novel, 'The Self-Satisfied.' They returned it."

"And you are going to see them personally?"

"Yes."

"Well," said Weyward, with sudden warmth,

"good luck, old fellow. I'll count on you at ten. Don't let those chipmunks spoil your appetite!"

The morning was frightfully hot, but he decided to walk the two miles on Broadway and save his five cents for a shoe polish. So he tucked the manuscript of "The Self-Satisfied" under his arm and walked on through the stifling shadowless glare.

Weyward's comment on the great publishers Klaw and Cheedle as "chipmunks" disturbed him. It left that unpleasant sensation that arises in our hearts when clever people busy themselves with the destruction of our boyhood's heroes. Not that Weyward had been either impertinent or officious, nor, on the other hand, could publishers be associated with Oliver's boyhood ideals. But yet, for years the publisher had stood in his estimation as an embodiment of all that was to be respected—a synonym for probity, erudition, generosity, and taste, a landmark of the nation's culture, a haven for talent and promise, a philanthropic, self-sustaining beacon to guide storm-tossed genius to recognition and affluence.

To those who made books, was not the publisher a guide and friend, a benevolent philosopher, a mentor and father?

Publishers in the nature of things could not, like pirates and bandits, supply the ideals of boyhood; even their unquestioned probity and respectability were perhaps a bit heavy. But to call them "chipmunks" was neither good taste nor wit. Oliver was disappointed in Weyward.

He was dusty and tired when he turned from White Street into Battery Square. The great house of Cheedle threw a vast grey shadow over the asphalt; he rested a moment in the shadow of Cheedle, to mop his hot forehead, then entered the hushed portals and gave his card to a clerk.

"Have you an appointment with Mr. Cheedle," asked the clerk, chewing something rapidly and looking hard at Oliver.

"No; say that I wish to see him on business, and that I will not keep him."

"Mr. Cheedle is out," replied the clerk, without moving.

This palpable lie bothered Oliver. He hesitated, glancing around at the partitions where clerks wrote in ledgers by the light of green-shaded gas-jets, although outside in the square the white sunlight flooded asphalt and grass-plot.

In the corner by a window a girl sat before a typewriter. She looked idle and not unamiable, so Oliver, ignoring the clerk, walked over to her.

"Do you happen to know whether Mr. Cheedle is in the building?" he asked politely.

She glanced at the clerk, who stood by the door watching them. The clerk scowled, but the girl, considerably impressed by Oliver's pleasant deference to herself, and, moreover, not unwilling to disoblige the clerk, pointed with her pencil toward a desk in the dark rear of the floor:

"Do you see that stout, smooth-faced genl'man? That's Mr. Cheedle, sir, talking to our Mr. Bim."

"Thank you very much," said Oliver.

"Not at all," replied the girl, promptly.

The clerk intercepted him, saying: "You can't go back there."

"Oh," said Oliver, "why not?" and walked through the dark building straight to Mr. Cheedle.

A stout man with pendulous lips pursed into a perpetual pout, looked around at Oliver saying:

"Oh—ah—this is Mr.—Mr. —"

"Oliver Lock," said Oliver.

"Exactly—Mr. Lock," said Cheedle, looking at him as though to recall some famous personage inadvertently forgotten; "pray be seated, Mr. Lock—er—you know our Mr. Bim?"

Oliver bowed to Mr. Bim, who in turn bowed, glancing at Cheedle for the proper cue.

Salmi Cheedle had published "Locke, on the Human Understanding," but of course this could scarcely be the same Locke. However, it was a good name; courtesy was cheap, and his memory bad. So he asked Oliver to be seated, and pouted affably.

"You returned my manuscript, 'The Winged Boy,'" said Oliver simply; "I came to ask you to be good enough to point out why my work is unavailable, and also to ask you to read my novel, 'The Self-Satisfied.'"

Mr. Cheedle's face changed; he glanced at the distant door, where the impudent clerk sat, and his glance boded no good for that clerk. Then he looked at Mr. Bim.

"It would be a great favour to me if you would give me a hint about my 'Winged Boy,'" said Oliver. "It is my first book; I have no advisers. I should be very grateful."

"Really Mr.—er—er—Mr. Lock," said Salmi Cheedle, "I cannot now recall the—the manuscript in question."

"The Winged Boy," said Oliver; "you may remember that you wrote me yourself."

Mr. Cheedle not only never wrote himself but he never read manuscripts. He pretended to do both, however, so he coughed his fat cough and said something about "our Mr. Bim," and "our valued authors"; and Mr. Bim took his cue.

"Naturally," he said, in a weak soprano voice, "naturally, Mr. Lock, we can scarcely recall one manuscript among the thousands Mr. Cheedle reads every year."

"But you said—" began Oliver.

"Exactly, Mr. Lock," wheezed Cheedle, "our Mr. Bim recalls the book—er—amateurish, I may say, without offense—was it not, Mr. Bim?"

"Very," said Mr. Bim.

"And—er—it was the—the young man's first book, I understand?"

"It was," said Bim, concealing a yawn.

Salmi Cheedle smiled, patted Oliver on the arm, coughed fatly, and smiled some more.

"I recall the book—er—er—the Singed Boy—er—exactly—good title—Singed Boy dreads the fire, eh?—exactly. Now, Mr. Lock, write us something

more mature—exactly—more mature! You’ve time—lots of time—give us something—er—shall I say more—more—exactly!—er——”

He darted a venomous glance at “our Mr. Bim,” who woke up from his cat-nap and blinked reproachfully at Oliver.

“Mr. Cheedle’s advice is good advice for young men,” he said; “it injures young men to rush into print with a first book.”

“But,” said Oliver, “some book must be the first book.”

Salmi Cheedle looked him over in blank amazement, then began to wind a big gold watch, still looking him over.

“Will you read my second book I have the manuscript here——” began Oliver.

“Really—really, Mr. Lock, we have so many books in hand,” protested Bim; “our list for the fall season is full and we could not undertake to read your manuscript for a year at least.”

Salmi Cheedle, having wound his watch, put it into his pocket and coughed a particularly fat cough.

“I cannot understand why manuscripts should not have a chance—at least, of being read,” said Oliver slowly.

Salmi Cheedle had wandered off into outer darkness somewhere, whence, at intervals, his fat cough resounded softly. “Our Mr. Bim” turned his back and yawned openly.

As Oliver passed the door with “The Self-Sat-

isfied " under his arm, he stopped to get a glass of ice water from the cooler near the door.

As he moistened his parched lips, the impudent clerk reviled him *sotto voce*, but, when he turned away, the typewriting girl looked up with a smile.

Oliver took off his hat to her and went his way.

Through the intolerable heated cañons he passed afoot, stopping at St. John's Place, where all of the Wallowby Sons firmly refused to see him or receive his manuscript, stopping to receive a rebuff from Mr. Weems of the Weems Co. on Broadway, told to call next January at Fox, Kite, and Jakel's, kept in a hot ante-room for an hour at the Kestrel Press Co., and finally received and deluged with excuses at Chudley, Skipp, and Fleeter's.

As he left, with Mr. Seely Fleeter's voice in his ear and the same ear ringing with the promises of Mr. Fleeter to "keep an eye on" him, and "avail" himself "of the first opportunity," he almost staggered out into Madison Square, faint with the heat, dazed, empty of stomach, and as close as he ever had been to despair.

He had one place left to go to; he shrank from it—he was so tired. But he went on, slowly, and at last he came to the great publishing edifice on Gramercy Park and sent up his card.

Whom the gods would destroy they first make authors.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SELF-SATISFIED.

A chapter full of prejudice.

THERE were no conventional potentates, no truly great rulers of democratic proclivities more easily approached than the three brothers Klaw,—Dawson, Rogueby and Magnelius.

Divinity is all very well to serve for the hedging of Kings; the Klaw brothers discarded it,—nay, they ruthlessly levelled all barriers between themselves and the humblest citizen and stood in a row on the ruined back-fence of divinity, naked, defenceless, urbane.

There was no penny-a-liner, no wretched quill-scratcher, no worm in the carcass of literature, too obscure to be denied an audience with the Klaw brothers—and worms might even take their pick or bunch the whole firm for one interview.

There was first of all Mr. Dawson Klaw, slow stepping, soft of voice, with prominent pale eyes,—blood-shot, from over study, perhaps,—and heavy bloodless cheeks feathered with down like the fluff on a new-born chicken.

Then there was Mr. Rogueby Klaw, a miniature

of Mr. Dawson, with miniature voice and movements and a roguish smile.

Then there was Mr. Magnelius Klaw, bovine and bulky, an enlargement of Mr. Dawson, with the addition of a few modern improvements,—like a house which is mostly basement.

All three brothers had large, soft, fat hands and the famous beaked noses which doubtless gave rise to the slander concerning the three-headed parrot.

Oliver had waited in an ante-room for about two minutes when a large-headed little boy came back and said politely : “ Which Mr. Klaw did you wish to see, sir ? ”

“ I don’t know,” said Oliver, wearily ; “ any Mr. Klaw who will see me.”

“ Please step this way, sir,” said the large-headed boy.

Oliver followed. He had expected to take a voyage in an elevator, cross several stretches of territory, ascend one or two iron stair-cases, creep through a few vistas of clerks, and be abandoned at the wrong side of a glass door. To his surprise and confusion he took about ten steps and, before he could hesitate, he was inside the glass door and facing three gentlemen, Mr. Dawson, Mr. Rogueby, and Mr. Magnelius Klaw.

“ How do you do, Mr. Lock,” said Mr. Dawson Klaw with the kindly smile of one who has destroyed the divine hedge and dug up the roots.

Mr. Rogueby bowed a miniature bow ; and Mr. Magnelius bowed a big bow and said “ aha ! ”

Oliver, tired, confused, weakened by the heat and his long fast, took the designated chair—inside the ruined hedge—and told his tale. When he had finished, he drew the manuscript from under his arm and, too weary to even hold it out, laid it on a desk beside Mr. Rogueby Klaw.

“Yes,” said Mr. Dawson Klaw, slowly and softly, “we read ‘The Winged Boy,’ and we decided it was not available.”

“Why?” asked Oliver. “I beg you to believe that I do not attempt to question your judgment or to appear impertinent. I would be glad to know where the fault lies. It is my first book; is it too palpably the work of an amateur?”

“Is it too palpably the work of an amateur?” asked Mr. Dawson, turning to Mr. Rogueby. Mr. Rogueby gave a roguish smile and referred the question to Mr. Magnelius, who merely said “aha!” in tones of hollow thunder.

Mr. Dawson, who always answered his own questions after passing them through Mr. Rogueby into the improved basement of Mr. Magnelius, only to catch them up again like a returned cud, ruminated, did a little digesting on his own account, and then, holding up two fat white fingers, said:

“No, it is not too palpably amateurish.”

[The delivery of a benediction was not more suave than his phrasing; his lifted fingers, which ecclesiastical gesture was so often ridiculed by the profane, seemed weighted with the dignity of all things temporal and spiritual. The attitude, the gesture alone

would have lent solemnity to anything he might have said, had it been fee-fo-fum, or cock-a-doodle-do!

"Then," said Oliver, very much impressed, "where is the fault?"

"Where is the fault?" asked Mr. Dawson of Mr. Rogueby again, and again Mr. Rogueby swallowed the cud with a roguish smile and passed it into the second stomach of Mr. Magnelius, who thundered "aha!" and expelled it for further mastication by Mr. Dawson.

"The fault is," said Mr. Dawson, blessing the company, the House of Klaw, the city, the entire hemisphere, and incidentally himself, with his two uplifted fingers,— "the fault is that it is not available."

The audience was at an end—Oliver plainly understood that. But, contrary to his expectations, Mr. Magnelius, who had been speaking heavily of "our Mr. Gouge," suddenly produced that individual apparently from his own coat-tail pocket, while Mr. Dawson silently blessed the trick of legerdemain and Mr. Rogueby smiled in miniature.

Mr. Gouge piloted Oliver to the door, then lisping, "thith way, if you pleath, Mr. Lock," drove him into a little square room full of letter files and other iron implements that, whatever they were, seemed equally suitable to the publishing business or the Spanish Inquisition.

"You may leave your manuthcript with me, Mr. Lock, it ith thafe with me—quite thafe. I will read

it at oneth, Mr. Lock," said Mr. Gouge, blinking at Oliver with watery eyes.

"Did you read my 'Winged Boy'?" asked Oliver.

"Yeth, thir, I did, thir. It ith exthquithite—tho exthquithite that we find it unavailable, Mr. Lock. Now, if you had a name!—"

Mr. Gouge's weak eyes filled and dripped at the mere idea of the value of "The Winged Boy" if Oliver only had a name.

"But—surely you did not refuse it because I am unknown?" asked Oliver.

"Yeth, thir," replied Mr. Gouge, drying his eyes. "And I should not advithe you to be too thanguine in rethpect to thith novel."

"Because I am unknown?" repeated Oliver, aghast.

"Yeth, thir, becauth you are unknown."

"But, damn it!—how can a man become known if you all refuse him a chance because he is unknown!"

"There are other publishers in town," observed Mr. Gouge, as Oliver silently picked up his manuscript and turned to go;—"there are Harperth, Stokeths, Scribnerth, Appletonths, Holths, Mac-Millanth, Putnamths,—all of them thometimeths take bookths from unknown authors—and risk failure."

"Thank you," said Oliver.

"Then there are cheap publisherths——" said Mr. Gouge, cordially.

Oliver opened the door.

“Good-day, thir, good-day,” said Mr. Gouge ; “remember—if you care to leave your manuscripts we shall always be glad to read any you may have. Thith way, thir,—*good-day*, thir.”

“Good-day,” said Oliver.

The publishers mentioned by Mr. Gouge he had not been to see. But what hope had he that they might be unlike those he had seen? So with a young heart full of bitterness, and the dread of despair tugging at his heartstrings, he passed by the doors of those who manufactured books, and turned his tired feet homeward.

The clang of the iron city echoed from cañon to cañon, the cloudless sky glittered with a coppery light, the steel-grey shadows crawled eastward over the burning pavements.

There was a sour-stale taste in his mouth ; those who fast much often have it.

But he felt too tired to eat when he reached the house on Long Acre Square.

His room was cool and dark ; he flung the manuscript on the bed, tossed his hat after it, and fell into an arm-chair, face pale and wet with perspiration, eyes vacant, hands hanging helpless over the carved arm of the chair.

After a long while he said aloud : “Well—well—what the devil am I to do?—what am I to do——”

Tired as he was, he felt the necessity of movement, of occupying himself with fighting off something ; those who are sick at heart must do that : it is only unhealthy minds that yield to inertia—

that seek it, knowing that it is the lethargy of despair.

He had, in his pocket, a copy of the *Areopagitica*; it was in his hand—and the curtain raised to admit light, before he was perfectly aware of what he was doing. Then, standing on his tired, dusty feet, he read aloud, for his heart's rest, the most splendid passage in the English language:

“ . . . Truth indeed came once into the world with her Divine Master, and was a perfect shape most glorious . . . But when He ascended and His Apostles after Him were laid asleep, then straight arose a wicked race of deceivers, who, as the story goes of the Egyptian Typhon with his conspirators, how they dealt with the good Osiris, took Virgin Truth, hewed her lovely form into a thousand pieces, and scattered them to the four winds. From that time ever since, the sad friends of Truth, such as durst appear, imitating the careful search that Isis made for the mangled body of Osiris, went up and down gathering up limb by limb still as they could find them.

“ We have not yet found them all, . . . nor ever shall do, till her Master's second coming; He shall bring together every joint and member, and shall mould them into an immortal feature of loveliness and perfection. . . . ”

For half an hour he wandered about the room, holding his open book tightly clasped to his breast, but not reading.

He bathed later, changing his linen indolently,

loafing about while he fastened studs and collar. His hunger troubled his serenity more or less, still he found time to enjoy a leisurely toilet, and to sprawl on the bed, hands clasped behind his head, wondering how soon his turn would come.

The splendid lines rang in his ears.

“Truth indeed came once into the world with her Divine Master——”

Sobered, he arose, looking about him with listless eyes. But, before he had finished dressing, he was smiling at his own condition among men—unknown, without means, without friends—unless Weyward—

That set him thinking of the violet-tinted note and the thought made him feel slightly silly.

“I feel,” he thought, “so frivolous, that I think I am fit to go and see Violet—and that’s what I’ll do, too——”

It was a few minutes after five by his watch ; five was the hour appointed for him to return the misdirected poem and receive his own manuscript.

He put her poem into his pocket and went out, locking his door, for the blue dog had a horrid habit of prying it open at times, and twice Oliver had found the naked little monster rolling on his bed uttering yelps of satisfaction.

Apartment 9 was on the floor above ; he had no difficulty in finding it, for the hall was well lighted and the number plain, and, besides, somebody inside the half-opened door was giggling.

“Probably Violet,” he thought, preparing to ring. But that proved unnecessary, for a young girl in a

light, fluffy gown opened the door and, trying to look serious, invited him by name to enter.

More or less unprepared for Violet in that form he went in and was presented to two more young girls in pale, fluffy gowns, who also attempted to look serious and failed in conjunction.

"This," said Violet Highlands, "is Miss McNair, and this is Miss Tring—and no doubt you think I'm silly because *they* giggle. I never do."

"How do you do," said Sylvia Tring, who was sitting behind a tea table; "Miss Highlands is young and we let her say things."

Here she giggled.

"Won't you have some tea?" asked Mazie McNair promptly. "Sylvia, don't act like a goose."

"Did you read my poem?" asked Violet, sitting down beside Oliver; "I shall die if you did—and I know you did—I shall die!"

She lay back in her arm chair, placing both hands over her eyes as though composing herself for the prophesied dissolution. Her hands were pretty; there were rings on them that sparkled a great deal.

"I did not read the poem," said Oliver, wishing he had.

"Oh," said Violet taking down her hands hastily. She looked at him so reproachfully that he began to smile.

"I read your story—and it was lovely," she went on, shovelling coals of fire where they might do the most good; "and Miss McNair read it and so did Miss Tring. I simply devoured every line.

It must be just lovely to write like that—and to think that horrid old Dawson Klaw sent it back!”

Oliver was confused. He had lived in many cities and in many quarters; he had met all kinds of people and it took him but a short time to place each person,—that is, in the Old World. From the demi-mondaine to the mondaine is a far cry in that same Old World and there are many links between, easily identified by those who know the social chain of the unclassed, from staple to ring.

But he had as yet no label for anybody in the New World; it was worth while to study it, too, and utterly useless to apply the worn, familiar standards of an older civilisation.

“If you don’t mind,” he said, accepting a cup of tea from Sylvia Tring, “I should be very glad to read the poem.”

Violet, greatly pleased, shook her head violently until a jewelled pin from her hair fell on the carpet.

Oliver picked it up.

“Are you American?” asked Violet.

He was perfectly unprepared for personal questions.

“I think you embarrass Mr. Lock,” observed Sylvia, tinkering with a chafing dish.

“Indeed, no,” said Oliver, discounting the challenge in Violet’s eyes—“I fancy asking questions may prove amusing. Would you mind?”

“I don’t mind questions,” said Mazie.

“Well, then,” said Oliver, “do you write poetry, too?”

"She wishes she could," observed Sylvia, still busy with the chafing dish.

"No, I don't," said Mazie; "it makes me think of the notes the Johnnies send."

Violet stood up and sniffed at the steaming chafing dish.

"I don't know why I write poetry," she said; "I never thought of sending any to be printed until one day I met Dawson Klaw and I just thought I'd see if he remembered my name, so I sent that poem."

"Did you see that lovely Mexican hairless dog down stairs?" asked Mazie. "Its name is Dawson."

"I saw a blue cur," said Oliver, laughing; "why is it named Dawson?"

Sylvia giggled; Violet walked over to the window looking uncomfortable and Mazie went on with an innocent air: "Why, didn't you know that Mr. Dawson Klaw was a friend of the family? But don't say *I* said so."

"Of Mrs. Wyvern's?" asked Oliver.

"Why, yes; so of course they named the dog Dawson."

"Don't be horrid," said Violet from the window; "Dulcie Wyvern is a sweet girl."

Sylvia began to serve some lobster à la Newburg, telling Oliver he could draw corks as soon as he felt physically able.

The mocking badinage, the veiled mischief in the young faces before him, the situation itself was bizarre to him. Painfully suspicious that perhaps

they were laughing at him, too—as indeed they were at times—unused to the slightly acrid tinge that salted the gaiety, he strove to find places among the unclassed for these three errant links ; and he found none, although he gathered that Sylvia Tring and Mazie McNair sang comic opera at apparently odd moments in a theatre called the “Athenian,” and that Violet Highlands hoped to do some very tragic things behind the footlights as soon as she graduated from “Signor Ditti’s Operatic Conservatory and School of Acting.”

He wanted to say to Violet, “but where the deuce is your mother?”

It came out presently ; Sylvia whispered to him that Violet’s father was “a Professor and did phenomena” and other philanthropic deeds to select circles in Boston, and her mother “believed in spooks and muscular minds.”

Sitting there in the brightly coloured little room, where Japanese umbrellas did much for the decoration and did it inexpensively, and a string of Japanese dolls, trussed up on the wall like papooses, distributed enamelled smiles over the furniture, he watched this miniature human comedy with bored eyes.

Boudoir, bed-room, and parlour, in one, the room, though he did not know it, was typical. The folding-bed, over decorated, was a flat failure as a disguised side-board ; the oak dresser accused it, the silver-backed brushes and mirror exposed it.

With his lobster and bread and butter on his

knees it took some self-restraint to pretend he was not hungry. Sylvia Tring, however, made herself at home over a bottle of olives, and Mazie and Violet were so unaffectedly helping themselves to lobster that he took courage and ate as he was bidden. It was well he did or the beer might have gone to his head; as it was, being under-nourished and nervously unstrung, what he drank brought a bit of healthy colour to his cheeks and a tonic to nerves unsteady from over-tension.

When Oliver was himself everybody liked him; he had that pleasant reserve so attractive to those who lacked it. Then, too, being unaffected, others were flattered by his direct, good-humoured speech, sometimes mistaking it for confidence until set right by his reserve. That made him respected, too.

Violet, being younger than the others, made eyes at him harder and less skillfully than did Sylvia. Mazie had her own method, which was as miniature as herself, and she babbled prettily of the stage and Johnnies and somebody who was "just too lovely in pink but somebody lowered the foots and she didn't get a hand," until Oliver understood, as was intended, that Mazie McNair was the hope and salvation of a cringing manager and the prop of a theatre that must have perished from Broadway had she not become its living caryatid.

They bade him smoke; he had no tobacco; he had given that up with other luxuries, which was foolish in him, for he craved it more than food. However, Violet had some very small gold-tipped

cigarettes and made it a favour for him to try one with her.

"Sylvia and I," observed Mazie, "gave that up ; it's horrid for your voice."

Violet was much too young to care.

The long sunbeams slanted through the lace curtains, outlining in bluish shadow the window frame. Sounds from the street came up indistinctly ; a fly made a soothing music on the pane.

"I wish—I wish,—" began Violet dreamily, "that I were——"

Presently she continued, with long pauses between each word :

"That—I—were—cast—away—on—an iceberg."

"Sweet little frappé you would make," said Sylvia, lazily spearing an olive.

"*Somebody* would be sure to come and find me—wouldn't they, Mr. Lock?" continued Violet.

It was on his tongue to say, "yes, your mother with a hair-brush," but he never hurt people's feelings.

"Why do you smoke?" he said. "Nobody does it now, you know, on the other side."

The white lie and the pleasant voice did what he wished ; Violet was young enough to care very much what people did—on any "side." And a moment later he was amused to see her secretly hide the cigarette under a saucer.

He made his adieu with enough formality to make all three young girls realise that he thought them worth the formality. This was not tact on

his part, it was pure kindness. Besides, they were certainly a pretty trio. They made him think of a basket of kittens.

When he went back to his room on the floor below, he remembered that he had not mentioned Weyward to Violet. Neither had she spoken of him.

The door was locked; he had some difficulty finding his key in the dim hallway. As he stepped toward the window at the end of the hall, holding up his bunch of keys, a man entered the passage softly, a bulky gentleman who walked like a cat among glasses.

Oliver stepped back to give him room. The man did not recognise him, perhaps because he stood in front of the hall window. But he recognised the man. It was Mr. Dawson Klaw.

As he opened his own door he heard Mrs. Weyward's emotionless voice in the hallway and the bells on Dawson, the blue dog. They jingled violently as though Dawson were either scratching or wagging his rudimentary tail.

About half past ten that evening Oliver rang at Weyward's door. They were very gay within.

He rang again. Weyward opened.

CHAPTER VII.

AN INTERLUDE.

In which Oliver spends a strange evening.

THERE was an essence of mignonette in the air; the room was a half-tone—the people impressions.

Lighted candles set in silver sockets, a flare of yellow light from the music-room, laughter floating above the mellow monotone that swelled to a harmony, then ebbed, with pauses full of whispers like a brook—the swish of petticoats on polished floors, the scent of summer flowers, the vague fresh odour of fresh gowns and gloves and delicate lace skirts and dainty shoes:—

A minuet played capriciously, a flurry of lace, white sparkles where some tiny jewel broke out in rays above a whiter neck, dimmed light on rounded arms and shoulders, dimmer shadows under eyes that opened in the glow as velvet flowers unclosed at dawn:—

Then there were interludes of quiet, and silken silences; the perfumed air from fans discreetly swaying, and the air the violins exhaled, quaintly capricious—and a young girl playing:—

Had the grave sweet echo of a younger century come to linger among them, caught from colonial

days? Had a simpler generation returned to simpler pleasures, valuing gentleness and speech and the gilt formula of honour, and the thin silver silences, and the lip-service of thinnest gold? No; it was only one phase of the unclassed.

"This 'is no masquerade," said Weyward; "the real souls of all who are here, come out to play like little children in the sun—here under these candles and tapestry. Then—they return to that iron thing outside the door."

"The city," said Oliver.

"The city."

A trio of girls' voices in the music-room began a serenade with harp and lute accompaniment—the soft tumult, the laughter, died to a mellow murmur, a whisper, above which fresh voices carried the air like a summer gale of laughter to the whirlwind finish, followed by dropping echoes from the harp.

Then, as the trio swelled again, joined in by more and more, an exquisite soprano voice soared out into the theme, sustaining its integrity above the ringing strings, above the rising chorus, then faded like an echo from a peak floating cloud-ward.

Weyward's voice came back to him through a gust of laughter that swept the tumult into another key:

"Many, if they knew how, would find their pleasure in a simpler happiness, with its insincere veneer that pleases and does not deceive—with its simpler virtues and vices—and its formal informality. I ask whom I please; only those come whom

I approve. I find my guests everywhere; some are descendants, some can only hope to have descendants; generations of delicate culture give me a guest here and there, the hod-carrier of yesterday sends me—that, for instance.”

A brown-eyed, sweet-faced girl passed them, with the faintest smile at Weyward.

“It’s Tessie Delmour, a hat model for Armand. I saw her behind the counter in a milliner’s store,” said Weyward. “Now she plays that Stradivarius, and,” he added with a shrug, “I sell bath-tubs, and live my life out among the unclassed.”

Oliver spoke of the music.

“Yes,” replied Weyward, “we all understand sounds here—not as they understand sounds in that iron thing out there.”

Oliver’s eyes sought the shrouded window.

“We understand the value of words, too, I think. That young girl yonder can talk to you about the violin or about her hats and feathers. Or she can make the violin speak for her when she is tired of talking. If you feel like it you may compromise the programme and talk of love.”

“Provided I neither understand hats nor music?” suggested Oliver, dryly. “Who is that playing the harp?”

“A young un-married married woman of the younger set,” said Weyward, carelessly.

“You don’t mean a woman in New York society?”

“Why not? Many of them are at home among the unclassed outsiders.”

“Is her husband here?”

“Her late husband is, her present spouse is absent.”

“And he knows she is here?”

“I’m sure I can’t say, but I suspect not,” laughed Weyward. “I leave details to my guests; they either ‘come or stay away,’ like the guests in the street song.”

“Then—this is democracy?”

“No, it is not. Come if you will, stay if it pleases you. Here is nothing that attracts them—out there—not even democracy.”

He looked at the shaded windows; the iron thing outside lay silent.

“No, not democracy. There is no license here. There is the freedom of the individual—the liberty to ask, the liberty to grant, the liberty to refuse. There is the liberty of taste, of inclination, of coming in and of going out—and the fundamental liberty of silence. No, it is not democracy.”

“It is strange,” said Oliver, “that with all this liberty the place should not ring with din and discord—all being free, there in the music-room.”

“They are at liberty to have what they wish—even discord.”

“I call that license,” said Oliver.

“Do you? Why don’t you go around and talk to anybody you choose to. Nobody’s ever presented here.”

Oliver rose and looked into the music-room. Two young fellows were fencing there without

buttons to their foils. The music of steel crossing steel rang pleasantly out in the murmur of cadenced whispering. Somebody struck chords from a spinnet; it was the sword theme, changing into an absurd variation—"Voici le Sabre!" amid soft cries of shame!—and volleys of musical laughter.

"They'll be at it with Indian sabres later; go about, my dear fellow; you'll see none of these people again without masks—unless you meet them here next month, under my tapestry and candles."

Presently Oliver said: "Everybody smokes cigarettes when they see fit; there are decanters, too."

"People here never take too much of anything—only enough of what they like. Then they leave."

"There is a young girl there, holding one of your lutes. I think she has had enough champagne," observed Oliver.

"Perhaps. If she took more she would go home. Nobody offends here, and nobody takes offence. The women I ask need have but three characteristics, youth, pleasant eyes and mouths, and a desire to come here. I exact nothing in particular from my guests, they nothing of me. I do take toll—sometimes."

"I see you do," laughed Oliver, glancing at the rows of slippers in their thin, glass-locked cases.

"A single slipper here and there—a record that amuses me," said Weyward.

“From each?”

“Oh, no—not from every one. You see, I have only a few slippers—not twenty in all.”

After a short silence Oliver said: “Isn’t this whole thing tintured with decadence?”

Weyward said: “You will find no taint; you will hear no epigrams born in perversion, no ‘mots’ nor ‘bon mots’ nor straining after brilliancy nor bandying of inverted phrases labelled epigram.”

He stood up lazily.

“Badinage—if you will; yes, and a smart thrust in tierce. Do you fence? I can butcher your buttons for you. Oh—then go and talk to people.”

“Men?”

Weyward laughed: “As you like—unless you mean to begin a collection of slippers.”

“I thought,” said Oliver, “that you had some people you wanted me to meet.”

“I have. They’re here—find them. I never introduce.”

Oliver saw him pick up a foil and stroll away, carrying it with the grace of a gallant, in the days when the iron thing outside the windows there was young.

Passing along toward the music-room he met the eyes of people standing or sitting here and there. One, a well-built, broad-shouldered young fellow, nodded in a friendly way, and, when Oliver stopped, hesitating, said: “There’s some good whiskey here; will you split a bottle of soda?”

The split was successful; Oliver found his

voice. "This is my first evening here; it is an absolutely new experience."

The square-shouldered young man lighted a cigarette.

"I wanted to ask you," he said, "what you thought about the possibility of using a scene like this on canvas."

"I haven't thought about it," said Oliver smiling.

"Haven't you? Well, I have. By, the way my name is Trivol and I'm an artist—not much of a one yet."

"I'm Oliver Lock, a writer."

"Not much of a one yet?" inquired Trivol.

"No," laughed Oliver, "not much of a one yet."

"Suppose," said Trivol, "you come down to the Monastery and look at my pictures."

"The Monastery?" repeated Oliver.

"It's a place for studios and apartments. Its name is the 'Monastery'—probably as reasonable a title as that of the little nuns of Poissy. Anyway, the number is 260 Washington Square. Will you come? My pictures are not very bad. And I don't paint things for you in the air with my thumb."

Oliver laughed and accepted.

"I've a theory—not much of a one—but it is going to enable me to paint gas-light studies using a key close to white, or—it isn't."

"I'll come," said Oliver; I mean it."

"To-morrow? I'll give you a dinner—not much of a dinner. Come at five, will you?"

Oliver thanked him and Trivol thanked Oliver and strolled off to show the sweet-faced, brown-eyed hat model how to tune her lute.

"Not much of a tuner," Oliver heard him say as he receded into perspective.

It was strange, the whole thing;—it was bizarre to a degree.

Oliver sat down beside a young girl who had her back turned to him. Hesitating whether to speak to her, merely because he liked the shape of her back, he decided not to when she looked over her shoulder at him with the faintest shadow of amusement in her blue eyes.

"You thought I was much younger, didn't you?" she asked.

"No," said Oliver, recognising the young divorcée whose absent husband he had busied himself about; "but I did not know when I sat down that it was you who played the harp."

"Do you play?" she asked, turning half way toward him. Her gown was tinctured with the odour of mignonette;—too apparent.

"No. Your playing was pleasant. I care a great deal for the harp. I wish I could talk music."

She was very young, scarcely nineteen.

"I only feel like talking about music—or love," she said, trying to frighten him.

"You make music," said Oliver, coolly, "I have heard you; now I can make love. Will you hear me?"

"As well as I make music?" she asked seriously.

"What are you, a writer? There's ink on your cuff—no, there isn't. Are you?"

"Yes," said Oliver laughing, tempted to add Trivol's valedictory modification. "But I am human too," he ended, looking at both cuffs.

"The realists in literature make us sorry we are human; the romanticists make us grateful," said the girl. "Which are you?"

"Don't be afraid," he said; "I could not make anybody sorry that you are human."

"Being divine?" she asked innocently. "See how I have to teach you to make love after all. Have you seen Mr. Weyward's collection of slippers?"

"Yes," said Oliver.

"Why don't you begin one—now?"

He met her pretty blue eyes steadily for a moment—then his gave way. Under her gown's flimsy edge he caught the glimpse of a slipper's narrow toe tapping the polished floor. The odour of mignonette grew sweeter. It was in her slippers, perhaps.

After she had done what damage she cared to she sent Oliver for an ice. He found the ice but he did not find her again.

Once or twice that evening he caught a glimpse of another figure that seemed to him curiously familiar, but he never could get a good view of the face. It was the figure of a girl in a flimsy billowy evening gown, a woman beautifully poised, rounded and firm of arm and shoulder, with small,

well-shaped head and a knot of burnished hair low in the neck.

Before he went to make his adieu to Weyward he tried to find her again and could not, but, as he started to go, he caught a glimpse of her back as she left the door.

He went out of the same door, glancing curiously into the street—for he would have liked to have seen her face—then he climbed the stairs. The next moment he saw her on the landing above him, standing in the dim gas-light, and as he passed her in the hallway, he turned his head.

It was Dulcie Wyvern, transformed by her evening gown,—tall, superb of limb and figure, with the white, youthful face of a school-girl on a neck of ivory.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STORY PROGRESSES.

In which two people surprise a secret and a young man adds to his collection.

SHE looked up with a breathless smile ; he bowed and passed on, surprised and amused that it should have been Dulcie Wyvern he had been dodging after at Weyward's,—marvelling a little too that Weyward had found in her the material for a guest.

He unlocked his door, entered, and sat down for that ten minutes' retrospective reverie outsiders indulge in after an evening away from familiar surroundings.

There was a mirror opposite ; he raised his head and met his own reflected eyes faintly smiling.

He hesitated to undress, to discard the cool, well-fitting garments of ceremony, now that his brief play-hour had ended. Outsiders feel their poverty most at night ; their evening dress is a hyphen connecting them with all that is fair and gay and bright—all that is beyond their reach.

“ Indeed,” he said under his breath, with scarcely a shade of mockery, “ fine feathers make fine birds and borrowed plumes encourage self-respect. Thrice is he armed whose trousers fit , and triple

chance in life has he with habit costlier than his purse can buy !”

Yes, his brief play hour was ended—and the city waited there, outside his window. But he would not think of that just yet; the pale candle flare was in his eyes and in his ears the sound of pleasant voices, already distant, already fading,—and he must hasten to re-enter the dissolving pageant ere the visions turned to spectres, ere colour fled and the phantom candles were snuffed out and the voices echoed sadness.

He leaned toward the imaginary warmth of an empty fire-place, to see pictures pass before his eyes.

And they passed, ghosts of the hour before, under Weyward's candles, with the noiseless flutter of fans, with echoless laughter and the soundless harp-strings mutely quivering.

The vision soothed him, the grey procession grew greyer, then silvery, illuminated by candles—no, stars. A pale veil began to settle over all—over him too. It was slumber.

When, no longer stirring, he dreamed on, close to sleep, though not yet sleeping, far away he heard a tapping at a door—very soft, closer now, and now so close that he stirred and his eyes opened.

He sat up; somebody was knocking at his chamber door.

“It is I,” came a whisper; “I know I should not. Are you asleep?”

“Is it you, Dulcie?” he said, not yet free from

the veil of slumber and the companionship of the phantom he was following through dream-land.

He was in that dreamy humour that found companionship welcome, and he did not stop to care what his words might mean. Besides, two people in a dark and sleeping house, whispering together, find their isolation in itself a confidence unpremeditated.

"If I come in—and sit there—just for a minute—on that arm chair ——" she whispered.

"Come in," he said, "it would be a wicked chance to miss."

She slipped in and sat on the edge of the arm-chair. After he had been talking for a few minutes she nestled down in the big chair, head resting, bare arms over the carved mahogany.

"Of course," he ended, "if anybody should catch us it would be scandalous—if they don't—and that's the curious part of it—there is no scandal, as the only reason for scandal would be in somebody finding out how innocently two people can be awful."

"I am going in a moment," she said; "I couldn't bear to undress when I was not tired and my gown was so pretty and—I did have such a good time!"

"So you know Weyward," he said.

"I—I don't. I saw him first one day in a cross-town car—I saw you too ——"

"And I you," he said, smiling.

"Then, one evening when I came home, he was

in the hallway unlocking his door. He turned around and invited me—but in a way, you know—”

“Not impertinent?” he asked mischievously.

“No—although it was, perhaps. But somehow I felt that I was going to miss something important if I did not go to-night. And oh!—I am so glad I did go. And to think you were there too!”

“Really,” he said, “did you not see me there?”

“I thought I did see you, once or twice,” she said truthfully, “but you always had your back turned and I could not be sure. Somehow I couldn’t find you. When I left I meant to wait and see if you came in. Did you hear me singing—the air, I mean,—while they all were carrying on the serenade,—and the blue-eyed girl and the harp——”

“Was that *your* voice?” he exclaimed.

“Yes, my voice. I had never until then heard that serenade. What a strange, strange evening—not like a dream, but like something that ought to be always, but never is.”

She went on, opening one hand for emphasis ;

“I care for all that ; I want what I had there, freedom !”

“The rest,” she continued, “all that will come to-morrow and the next day and the next, makes me wish the more for this evening. I don’t know : I feel that things are wrong somewhere near me—but I can’t see them. Is this the world we cried after in *Nôtre Dame*?”

"This is the world," he said, "as seen from your window in Long Acre."

"Then it is not what I thought. Yet I do have good times, upstairs with Violet and the others—"

She stopped short.

"Well?" he said quietly.

"Did you see them—Violet and the others? Do you find them interesting?"

He nodded, watching her with inattentive eyes.

She spoke of the three girls, of her own solitude except for them, of childish frolics and immature escapades innocently risky. He listened absently. She asked him if he cared to visit Weyward again.

"When things go better with me," he said, "I am going away."

She rose from her chair. Over her bare shoulders, through the dusky, gas-blurred window, he saw dawn painting a ghastly frieze across the east.

And, with dawn, the vision of his play-hour vanished, leaving fatigue and dull mistrust, and the questions of life to be answered once more.

Then he saw her, between him and the window, with the grey dawn tinting arms and neck and the gas-light staining her gown; and, under her eyes, shadows like velvet shading velvet.

"This is all wrong," he said. "It is morning."

"Oh—if they come—yes. But I am to sleep upstairs with Sylvia. Mama said I might to-night. I have the key hidden away under the mat."

She added: "I don't mean to say that Mama knew I was going out of the house."

He had thought for some time that Mrs. Wyvern cared little what her daughter did. It was dawning on Dulcie, too.

“If I could find employment,” she said musingly.

He too sought employment; he was thinking of it then.

She lingered a while, wistfully watching him, knowing he was in trouble—but not knowing how near its shadow had crept toward her. Then she went away saying she was tired and would slip in to sleep with her mother.

He stood near the window, pulling at the fringed curtains, scarcely heeding her; for, already, through the blank void of paling formless shadow, the iron monster outside was taking shape and substance—the misshapen, million-ribbed thing, wrapped in stupor.

Yes, that was the enemy, that huge articulated rusting bulk, digging its million fangs and claws and suckers into the strip of rock and sand that lay between two rivers and an ocean. A city? No, a gigantic parasite glued leech-like to an island—covering it, bedded on its bowels, stupefied to satiation.

Morning came creeping across the world. Colourless, sad, the city emerged from vapoury shadow and a phantom of shapeless chaos.

Had morning crossed the continents and the seven seas for this!—to reveal this hideous wilderness of steel, this plaster desert choked with brick and refuse, sweating steam, reeking with smoke from countless craters,—this awful mockery of a

human refuge, this cage, this devil's trap, imitating the homes and marts and haunts of men!

Loathing it, he stared out into the grey day-break. It had caught him too, and he hated it. Was it for this that he had come back after many years? Could it be he, trapped here, where even those who paced the cage with him ignored him, where the scuttling crush of imprisoned creatures scoured the cage for scraps, finding subsistence where he found nothing!

Caged, trampled by the caged, so hopeless in his isolation, so ignorant, so unprepared, he felt the weight of every brick of every iron girder crushing him, forcing him under, the better to hold him down where all could spurn him.

Spurn him! Aye, him and his, all he had. The yelling echoes from the streets stunned him; in his ears, jarring and clashing, the din from wall to pavement struck at him, warning him back, fiercely, smiting him again in echoes that mocked him for what he shrank from, and cursed him for what he was, a helpless living thing, useless to man.

"But," he said aloud, "they cannot silence me."

He looked around from the window. Dulcie had gone. He turned the gas out; the livid light in the room was enough.

The door, still ajar, opened on the hallway, where the gas burned, turned low.

There were sounds in the hallway, too; somebody passed his door going toward the street stairway—a man's heavy familiar figure slinking past in

furtive silence, treading softly as a cat among glasses.

He closed his door, careless who heard him—in-different to the sleeping house, and the woman somewhere awake within—and the startled man slinking away through the empty street below.

Anger succeeded contempt as he thought of the young girl and what she must one day learn in this house that stifled him already with its squalid secret.

Then he slept on his pillow ; while, at her mother's door, the young girl, trembling in her ball-gown, crouched behind the curtains.

For the secret was no secret now to her! Dry-lipped, dry-eyed, she shrank from her mother's door, away, anywhere, falling there on the stairs to hide her face in her hair.

A sound turned the scarlet shame on neck and cheek to whitest terror. A cab stopped in the street outside ; Weyward unlocked the door, and sauntered in. He did not see her. To find his door-key he felt in the pockets of his evening clothes, searching them carefully ; and he found his keys in his breast-pocket, tied in a glove which he drew from the satin depths of a tiny white slipper.

She dared not stir until he had entered his rooms.

He left his door open, perhaps for air. She heard him whistling gaily as he moved among the wrecks of a fête, still heavy with the odour of stale roses. Why should he not be cheerful? He had

added to his cabinet a slipper of satin, delicate, high-heeled, and faintly perfumed with the scent of mignonette.

Presently he closed the door.

When she rose from the stairs, her hair veiled her face. Eyes and cheeks were dry and hot and the fever of shame throbbed in her burning lips.

She stood at her mother's door, until the sun stole through the hall and the blue dog stirred within, shaking its tin bells.

Inside the room the mother slept heavily; outside, the daughter leaned against the door, tearless and voiceless, fearing the sleeping thing within.

CHAPTER IX.

A JOURNEY NOWHERE.

Being an account of the wanderings of a bankrupt young man, and the results of day-dreams in the open air.

IN August, Oliver left Mrs. Wyvern's. His money was nearly gone; his bill there took all he had left,—and a little more, which he raised at a pawnshop.

What articles remained, he managed to pledge for a few dollars more, and, with this money, a valise packed with two manuscripts, a cake of soap, and a comb, he went out into Long Acre Square, well dressed and groomed as usual, wearing on his back the only garments he possessed,—and in his button hole a white pink, Dulcie's offering at parting.

He was neither appalled nor dismayed; he was glad to leave the house with its secrets and squalid intrigues; he was glad to go out, almost penniless as he was, into the dusty jaws of the city that he hated.

But his face clouded as he remembered that Weyward had seen him entering a pawnshop, once when hunger drove him. And when that night, Weyward came and begged him to borrow what he wanted, he remembered the humiliation his refusal

cost them both, endangering their friendship, straining their courtesy, until Weyward left the room, polite but furious, and Oliver went that night to leave his watch and chain with Cohen.

Once he met Violet Highlands and Sylvia Tring in the hallway, and promised to call again. He did not go, however; he did not even keep his promise to Trivol, but sent a note of excuse. Among the weak, misery loves company of any kind; among the sound in mind and body, unhappiness seeks solitude. Solitude is a balm, to be taken cautiously, —a medicine that even the poor can afford.

It is not strange, perhaps, but Oliver suffered less from mental unhappiness and actual hunger than he did from his longing to smoke. The desire tortured him.

The smell from the clay pipe of a labourer passing seemed delicious; he would walk sometimes in shady squares where men sat smoking, trying to subdue his craving.

But now, standing there in the white sunshine of Long Acre, not knowing where in the world to go, he felt a curious ease, almost a lightheartedness, in his vagabond freedom.

An incident that had amused him years before came back to mind and made him smile. He remembered another amusing episode that occurred two days before, when he received a personal note from Dawson Klaw, saying that his "young friend Mr. Weyward had spoken so highly of Mr. Lock's work" that he and brother Rogueby and brother

Magnelius would be willing "to consider another manuscript, with a view to publication."

And Oliver had taken the note to Weyward, saying; "You're a good fellow, but I'd throw the story down the sewer before I'd have that blue dog touch it!"

"You can't afford to talk that way!" said Weyward, amused.

He was a young fool; anybody will agree with Weyward that he could not afford to talk that way.

He was a fool; he knew it; he knew that Weyward knew it.

"Not if I were starving, Weyward, my dear fellow," he said; "but it was very kind in you to use your influence."

He had not seen Weyward since; he preferred not to. Some day when success was dawning—well, he would be very glad to see Duncan Weyward then.

The sunshine seemed almost cool in Long Acre Square: the morning grew breezy, the sky dappled its azure with silver fleece and white mare's-tails sweeping to the zenith.

He thought of Dulcie Wyvern, saddened to remember her.

Alone, worse than alone in the world—for a child with nothing but itself to question, answers some questions by instinct—the girl was learning that wisdom that meant unhappiness or indifference.

He imagined she suspected the house's sickly secret; he did not know she knew it all.

She had changed within a week ; there was a feverish uncertainty in her voice and movements, a light in her grey eyes that he did not understand.

She spent all her time with Sylvia and Mazie now ; he saw her once or twice in the hallway, but his own trouble lay heavy upon him and he did not know how heavy hers was nor could he ask, even though his pity left him looking after her when she passed on her narrow way.

With a single shirt to his back and a valise full of folios type-written and soiled, swinging his valise, he walked straight into the city's smoky maw, and down its growling gullet, where Broadway, vomiting dust and vehicles and hurrying human things, gaped for him with ribs of iron distended.

He had his shoes polished, not grudging the money. Besides, the operation gave him a few more minutes to decide which road to take.

To people passing who glanced at him he appeared to be some young man of leisure returning from the country to resume his profession. For he had that figure and presence that go with ease and breeding, and any clothes on him always appeared fresh and smartly cut. Then, too, he had the kind of head that hats look well on ; and there was something about his linen that suggested leisure for minute attention to details. As for the ensemble, including the white pink in his buttonhole, it certainly confirmed the suspicion of affluence and many baths.

That he carried his own portmanteau signified

nothing in New York, that he gave a small tip to the Italian who brushed him, corroborated previous conclusions.

A ragged urchin offered him the morning papers, a Greek rose-peddler besieged him and followed him for a block ; cabmen perched high on well-kept hansoms said : " Cab to the ferry, sir ? Grand Central Depot ? "

The current of the human tide at that hour sets due south through the grand cañon of Broadway ; it carried him with it past acres of plate-glass windows, still gay, though depleted, for the autumn stock had not yet taken the place of summer's slightly wilted fabrics.

The theatres were closed, entrances choked with weather-stained bill-boards trumpeting some attraction long dead and ended, or promising future wonders for the autumn. There was much dust on plate-glass door, on coloured globe and cherrywood foyer. One or two fat-faced men wearing unclean billy-cock hats, haunted the empty lobbies, chewing tooth-picks.

The dirty, yellow brick pile of the Opera, with its sad lime-kiln chimney, gave him, under its rusty iron awning, a moment's breathing space. Across the street the mangled fragment of Moorish construction, disfigured with fire escapes by law-abiding tribes, bulged into view, crowding its red-brick on the attention of the passing gentile and the stranger without the gate.

Oliver passed on, serenely conscious of the hurry

and crush around him, glancing into strange faces with that glimmer of human interest that is neither curiosity, insolence nor fat stupidity.

Pale-faced shop girls found nothing unpleasant in his eyes, tired-eyed young men regarded him amiably. Here and there the dark face of a Jew with heavy-lidded, shifting eyes attracted his passing notice, reminding him of boulevards in other lands and the gilt façades of cafés.

He passed Romaine's Theatre, looking up at the harmless, meaningless front, wondering a little why Octavius Romaine, greatest of American Managers, should care so little for art at his own doorstep.

Inside the lobby there were framed photographs of the famous company; he lingered a moment before the noble beauty of Ida Mohun, the kindly, wrinkled face of Mrs. Billington, the girlish sweetness of Marie Swift.

There was a photograph of Octavius Romaine himself among his company, famous collar and all.

In Madison Square he sat him down, not choosing to soil his collar with perspiration,—and indeed, there was no reason for haste, because his destination might lie the other way for all he knew.

It was cool under the trees; a few nurse-maids wheeled human embryos about in the dappled sunlight and shadow, a few tired men dozed on the benches or, dusty legs crossed, read listlessly in soiled newspapers of the day before. There was a pleasant noise of water falling, the still music of

moving leaves above, the voices and laughter of little children;—and over all the divine blue of this western sky of ours, over which a white cloud drifted westward, edged with pearl.

Sun-warmed to a golden tint, the beautiful Square tower rose above the trees in the northeast, glowing against the blue; and, below, through the trees, dusky silent arcades appeared, a shadowy background for green branches.

Oliver loved the tower, where all day long a golden goddess shot her golden arrows into the teeth of the four winds, and, all night, her silvery phantom hung above the trees bending a silver bow.

Behind him the noble avenue echoed with the flat slap of hoofs on the asphalt,—the rumble of battered stages, the silent whirl of hansoms, rubber-tired. Before him, across the square, a white marble palace of commerce glimmered through the trees, hinting of the unquiet thoroughfare beyond. But the distant tumult of gong and iron curve came to his ears too faintly for offence; the splash of the fountain, there, was louder. There was nothing to interrupt his day dream, and he dreamed on in peace.

An hour later, cheered by his idle rest, he stood up, freshened by the shadow of living green, ready again to set out for nowhere.

And, as he rose to go, something on his coat attracted his attention.

It was his own pocket, turned inside out.

Standing there, staring at the empty benches near

him, he felt that the situation was too tragic to escape that ludicrous element that has dogged the dragging feet of tragedy since Abel's taking off.

Certainly his position was too absurd ; it contained all the material for that bitter national mirth born with our ancestors betwixt a pioneer's stockade and a forest full of painted wild men. What on earth could he do but laugh ! When, how, where he was robbed he had not the slightest idea. There had been people near him, that was all he could remember.

After a little while he smiled again, less pleasantly than before, then picked up his valise and went his way, his guide the weather-vanes, companioned by the sparrows, and his own shadow shrinking on the pavement.

CHAPTER X.

END OF THE FIRST ROUND.

A chapter dealing with some vagrants and Mr. Jack Payser.

WHEN he had been many days and nights looking for work to keep his soul and body on neighbourly terms, he came, on the edge of the evening, to a little park, all saffron with the light of sunset, dusky and cool under ancient trees where the turf was taking on the purple bloom of twilight and a placid fountain mirrored a single cloud.

He sat down, placing his two manuscripts beside him on the slatted bench. He had sold his valise the week before for a few cents, and the money was gone now, except one nickel coin, held tightly in the palm of his hand.

There was a man beside him, wearing shoes without laces and a coat buttoned to his bony throat ; and the fellow coughed and coughed, staring at vacancy with sunken eyes.

Towards twilight the electric lights snapped out in violet sparks on every tall green pole : the voices of children, playing by the still pool of the fountain, blended to a murmur ; dusk mantled the foliage under a deepening sky.

To the south a long line of dull old houses fenced

the square, sombre brick façades stained by the red embers in the west ; on the north side, where the quiet asphalt avenue widens into a circle, the white arch of marble, tinged with pink, glimmered through the sycamores.

Behind it, north and west, low, monotonous, red-brick houses bounded the oasis of green, and in the east, grey lime-stone cliffs, piled up cube on cube, riddled by little windows, crimsoned with the last sparks of the sinking sun.

The hum and jarring from the great avenues east and west reached him fitfully, sounding like the rush of hidden waters in a gorge. Shadows came and spread their slim patterns over the grass,—strange trembling shadows, etchings of foliage and tangled branches, where the electric lights sparkled through clustered leaves. There were pools of white on the asphalt, into which shadowy creatures darted, swimming to and fro in the lustre of the white lamp, sometimes shrinking, sometimes suddenly magnified in growing distortion, only to fade again and dwindle to a quivering patch of grey.

Looking up he saw the little night-moths hovering around the hissing lamps ; at his feet errant dusk beetles explored the asphalt or hurried past toward some unappointed rendezvous, travelling tirelessly, each to its own predestined goal.

And he had none,—no goal, no destination, no journey's end where rest awaited.

The ragged man beside him moved, muttering to himself.

There was a basement brilliantly lighted on the south side of the square, where an illuminated sign hung:

SPINKLE BROTHERS, ALES, WINES, AND LIQUORS.
--

Oliver glanced at the ragged man beside him, then rose and started across the square toward the illuminated sign of the brothers Spinkle.

The cellar was neat; a bar stood along the wall, a few tables filled the interior. Several sober-faced men played pinochle near a clean but faded billiard table; behind this a well-dressed young fellow sipped Rhine wine and stroked two comfortably whiskered grey cats.

"What can I get for five cents?" asked Oliver in a low voice.

"Beer?—Domestic?" suggested the barkeeper, folding two little fat hands on the edge of the bar.

"Something to eat," said Oliver faintly.

The barkeeper retired; Oliver saw him cutting bread at the other end of the bar.

The sight of food made him weak, almost sick.

He drank part of the beer, then asked if he might carry what remained to a man outside. Spinkle, the proprietor, nodded brusquely.

When Oliver again found the ragged man on the bench the fellow was asleep. He started and trembled as Oliver touched him, perhaps dreading the

merciless cuff of the police or the still more merciless club on the soles of his tattered shoes.

They ate the sandwiches in silence; the man drank what beer was left; Oliver drank from the iron fountain. A lost cur watched him at a respectful distance, shivering at its own temerity. He gave the yellow outcast all he could spare, and the creature followed him when he took the empty glass back to Spinkle's.

"I am very much obliged to you," said Oliver.

"You are quite welcome, sir," replied Spinkle. "I shall hope to see you again."

Oliver went out, up the cellar steps to the street. John Spinkle gravely polished the wet bar.

"Who was that?" asked the young man behind the billiard table, emptying his glass of Rhine wine, and flattering both cats impartially till their tails stood up rigid.

"A gentleman in hard luck," said Spinkle. "I guess he'll sleep in the square to-night."

The young man, whose name was Payser, said nothing more; the two grey tom-cats purred on his knees. Presently he rose, dumping the indignant cats onto the floor, and walked briskly over to the bar.

"How much, Johnny?"

"Fifty cents, Mr. Payser; and a sandwich, that's fifteen more."

Sandwiches had gone up since Oliver bought three for five cents.

"I guess, Mr. Payser," he said, "that young gentle-

man is sick. And he won't sleep much, anyway—unless you speak to Slyder."

Slyder was the policeman who haunted the square to chase pale-faced urchins from the only bit of grass they had ever seen. He also murdered sleep and punched the sleeper with buckskin fist.

"Yes, I guess I will speak to Slyder," said Jack Payser.

A few moments later, Mr. Payser found Oliver alone; the ragged man had gone, Heaven knows where!—and Oliver sat with the yellow cur under the arc-lamps, watching the shadows of the dusk-moths in the pools of light at his feet.

Mr. Payser was a human paradox. Living alone in a house fairly crawling with Bohemians he still remained a frequenter of an exclusive club, and a broker in real estate.

Minutely scrupulous concerning his person, less exacting in regard to his ultimate salvation, he was a curious contradiction, worshipping high ideals, possessing a capacity for dissipation limited only by a rebellious liver, practical yet romantic, ascetic yet a sybarite, he was both quixotic and keen, cautious and impulsive, and a man whose loyalty was honoured by his friends and whose honour was a proverb even among his enemies.

It was his quixotic embodiment that approached Oliver, and sat down with an airy ease native to him.

"I saw you drop in for a drink at Johnny Spinkle's just now," he said. "I should have bowed but I wasn't perfectly sure you remembered me."

Oliver raised his head and looked at Payser, but without suspicion.

"I remember you," said Payser, calmly, with a glance at the packet of manuscript. "I haven't seen you at Johnny's lately."

"I made my first visit to-night," said Oliver.

But Jack Payser was not the least abashed. He pretended to torture his memory for the location of a previous acquaintance with Oliver, until Oliver believed that they had met, and suggested Europe.

"It must have been," said Payser; "it certainly must have been in Europe—somewhere. My name is John Payser—you may remember——"

Oliver did not.

"I live across the square there," continued Payser. "You probably know lots of men who live in the 'Monastery,' don't you?"

"I know one," said Oliver, wearily.

Jack waited, but Oliver did not volunteer the man's name.

"Probably Tom Fydo," suggested Payser.

"I don't know him," said Oliver. He began to feel the long day's fatigue; at moments his head ached terribly.

Jack looked at the manuscripts once more. Oliver's name was on the covers.

"I think I've heard Trivol speak of you," said Payser, wondering himself where he had heard that name, Oliver Lock.

"I once met a Mr. Trivol—" began Oliver, unwilling to appear ungracious.

“ Dick Trivol, the artist ? ”

“ Do you know him ? ” asked Oliver. To speak was becoming an effort, but he could not fail in courtesy to any man.

“ Rather. He’s on my floor. He was at Johnny Spinkle’s just before you came in,—with Duncan Weyward.”

“ So you know Weyward too ? ”

“ Rather. Who doesn’t ? ”

After a moment Oliver said : “ Is Weyward very well known ? ”

“ Where he chooses to be,” said Payser ; “ he is one of the most run-after men in New York—as you probably know.”

“ I don’t,” said Oliver, listlessly ; “ why ? ”

“ Why ? Well, some people run after him because he’s popular and others because he’s the Earl of Firth’s youngest son. But he’s like the rest of us,—one of the unclassed—a rank outsider.”

Oliver was silent.

“ By the way,” said Payser, “ I wonder whether you have anything on hand to-night.”

Oliver had not.

“ Suppose we come across to the Monastery and smoke ? ”

Oliver did not smoke.

“ The man’s ill,” thought Payser ; “ he can’t stay here to-night.”

Oliver was certainly not well.

“ I’ll tell you,” said the adroit Mr. Payser ; “ if you’ll just step over to the Monastery while I get

my pipe,—would you mind? I'm miserable without it. What do you say, Mr. Lock?"

Mr. Lock said "yes" in a very weak voice. His increasing dizziness frightened him; he had suddenly become afraid of being left alone.

They rose and crossed the grass, saluted respectfully by Officer Slyder of the Park Squad; and Payser, pointing to the illuminated windows of the Monastery, gave Oliver a brief summary of the edifice and its contents.

"They collect rents with fixed bayonets; the agent is afraid to come often. The tenants of the Monastery are naturally known as monks and they appoint an Abbot every year, whose duties are to stand off the agent aided by three chief Friars, selected to fry and roast brother monks whom they suspect of any intention to pay rent."

Oliver scarcely heard him; his headache deafened him, but Payser rattled on amiably:

"Do you see those parlour windows? Ramon Quesada, the Vice-Consul from Yucatan, lives there. The rest of that floor is taken by a French nobleman, Count Rasta de Camp, who spends years in waiting for dynasties and *coups d'états*. Then, Mora Lessly, the wit, inhabits the next floor. I don't believe he does anything in the world but just inhabit places. Tom Fydo, free-lance and critic, rooms next. Sidney Jaune, the novelist, who writes Volapük tintured with a weak solution of Henry James and peppered with Café Americaine French, edits the American edition of *The Pink Rat* on the

same floor. Dick Trivol lives on the top floor; so do I; and directly under me Willy Tockingham writes terrible tales of bursting battle bombs until the whole shanty rocks and heaves like an aged Irishman after pay-day."

They ascended the crumbling brown-stone steps; Payser opened the door with a pass-key.

"It's a hell for rats," he said, "so don't mistake one for a cat in the dark."

There was no elevator; alpine ascents, scantily carpeted, led to the summit of the musty structure. The hallways smelled of cold gas and coal-gas and tobacco and paint; the tottering mahogany banisters rattled in their sockets as the two young men pressed upward.

"Excelsior," observed Payser as they reached the top; "pardon me a moment—pray enter, Mr. Lock."

The two bed-rooms flanking the study were bright with gas-light. There was an air of prim good taste everywhere; the furniture was modern and handsome and scarce, and the single rug sober and costly. An exquisite dry-point by Helleu hung over the open fire, a red and black chalk study and one of Bethune's water-colours flanked it. The rest of the four walls glittered with books.

Oliver was scarcely able to stand. He sat in a leather easy-chair, listening to Payser rattle on about the peculiar brotherhood of the Monastery, trying to keep his eyes wide open in the gas-light. But the glitter dazzled and wearied him; under his feet the floor seemed to move at moments, and

then he started in spite of himself, as one does on the edge of slumber, dreaming of falling.

Suddenly Payser's voice ceased; a moment later he heard it again, vague in the distance, receding, miles and miles away, growing softer and more pleading.

The amazement of Mr. Payser fluctuated between indignation and amusement. But the dark circles under Oliver's eyes told him a story already half divined.

"Case of black eye from the world," thought Payser; "first round a corker; world upper-cut him; clinched; referee ordered them to their corners. Fan 'em hard!"

He fanned Oliver vigorously with an imaginary towel.

"Poor chap," he said; "both peepers closed,—solar plexus, too—I guess I'll see Weyward."

He put on his hat and went out.

There was a chemist's on the corner; Payser entered and stepped into the closet where a transmitter, kept for the use of the Monastery, dangled in a tarnished receiver.

"Central" was feminine and hostile to that pay station; Payser and Central exchanged lively views concerning people who knew their business, before he could get Duncan Weyward on the wire. But he discovered that young man eventually at the Bronx Club and held an earnest conversation with him for ten minutes or so. Then Mr. Payser called Central again, was ingeniously insulted, but finally found

himself in connection with the *Argus* Office in Park Row.

The ensuing monologue occasionally degenerated into a buzz, punctuated by the tinkling of bells and threats on Payser's part :

“Is this the *Argus*?”

“Well, is Colonel Squimp there?”

“Don't lie to me, you little printer's devil, I know he's there!”

“Yes, I'm Mr. Payser——”

“Hold the wire yourself, you ink-striped, weasel-faced——”

“Hello!”

“Hello! Don't cut me off yet, I tell you!”

“Take the chewing-gum out of your mouth, I can't hear you.”

“Yes, I'm holding the wire. Let me alone—Hello! Is this Colonel Squimp?”

“Hello, Colonel! Yes, I'm Jack Payser. I want you to take a serial for the Sunday edition——”

“Don't want it? You've got to take it!”

“Yes, you will!”

“Don’t swear through the ’phone, Colonel; you’ve got to take it. The story is ‘The Winged Boy’; 25,000 words.”

“Cleverest chap you ever heard of—the famous young European writer, Oliver Lock.”

“What? Never heard of him! Oh, come now, Colonel, none of that. If your circulation won’t permit you to pay for a good thing——”

“Very well; the *Free Lance* will take it, then. Did I tell you that he refused an offer from Klaw,—and Duncan Weyward says the story is fine?”

“What? Yes,—if you can’t pay more. I can get twice that from——”

“All right; copy ready Thursday evening. Send me a check; I’ll settle with him.”

“Don’t swear, Colonel; it will curdle the gum in Central’s——”

“Why, Central, were you listening, you naughty young thing? My! What an angry child!”

Crack! B z z z z—r r r r—z z z z—pop!—sh—h.

So he hung up the transmitter and walked out.

When Jack Payser returned to his rooms he was annoyed to find Oliver still asleep, head fallen on his chest, heavy lines stamped deep under his closed eyes. The livid pallour on his guest's face disturbed Mr. Payser ; he hoped that Oliver was not going to have something queer.

But it was only starvation and trouble and the beer he had taken at Spinkle's, and the illness he contracted in the nights of fog and chilly starlight. His face was ghastly ; his sleep had become a stupour.

Payser hesitated to disturb him ; sleep was not a thing to be treated flippantly by Mr. Payser, whose acquaintance with that balmy restorer had become formal and distant. He went to the door and summoned his neighbour, Mr. Richard Trivol, who presently appeared in pajamas, smoking shag in a porcelain pipe.

"Friend of yours up against it?" inquired Trivol, wreathing his puzzled face in smoke.

Jack told him all he knew.

"It's Oliver Lock," said Trivol ; "I've an opinion—not much of a one—that he's probably half dead with something or other."

"That's what I say," muttered Payser ; "case of dead to the world. We'll put him in the south room, Dick."

Oliver did not wake.

Trivol lifted him with difficulty and laid him on the bed in the south room, while Payser convinced

that he, too, was aiding, ambled along behind Trivol waving his arms and breathing deeply.

"I have an idea," said Trivol, "not much of an idea—but he'll choke to death in that collar."

"Take it off," panted Payser, perspiring in sympathy with Trivol's exertions.

They undressed him easily; he had pawned even his socks and silken underclothes.

They made him as comfortable as they could, then stood beside the bed watching him, sobered by the presence of such poverty among them.

"Case of wolf at the door," whispered Payser, sincerely affected.

Not at the door—Oliver had none; but the wolf had been trotting at his heels through sunlight and moonlight and the pale lustre of the stars, day after day, until at last the trail had stopped for a while, there in Washington Square.

He had been to the office of every newspaper in the city; he had gone the rounds of the publishers again, all except Klaw, and the change in his appearance had not helped him.

As long as he did not appear actually disreputable he could use soap and water, free of cost, in the basements of the great hotels. He had his comb and tooth-brush also, but no hope of keeping his clothes decent, sleeping in them every night in squares or on the foggy piers along the river.

What money he made was gained partly by selling every scrap of clothing except shirt, coat and trousers, partly by the few odd jobs he had picked up here and there.

He had found it necessary to give up all thoughts of writing for the present ; the problem of the hour was simpler than attempting to make a living through the wealthy and benevolent Salmi Cheedle. So he made that worn-out request for "anything to do,"—a request so hopeless, so invariably refused with suspicion among our honest merchants.

Still, he had his two manuscripts, valuable as bank-notes to a marooned outcast in the Antipodes. And he carried them with him, tying the package by a string to his wrist when he slept in the city squares.

Now the tide of chance had cast him high and dry across the door-sill of Mr. Payser ; and with him it cast another live thing, the outcast cur he had fed in the square below.

"What is that yellow dog doing here ?" asked Payser, as the shivering creature, tail humbly tucked under, crawled into the open door.

The dog, at the sound of his voice, betrayed symptoms of nervous prostration ; but Trivol leaned down and touched its small shaggy head, saying :

"It's a Yorkshire—not much of a one. I'll take it, if you like."

"Let it alone," said Payser ungraciously, for the dog had crept close to the bed where Oliver lay and was sniffing at his hand on the bed's edge.

Presently it licked the limp hand, furtively.

"Oh, I can stand a flea or two, I fancy," observed Payser, trying not to pose before Trivol as a double Samaritan. "Come on down stairs."

They went out, shutting the door, but in a few moments Payser returned and sat down beside the bed, a prey to serious contemplation.

He had brought back some meat and milk for the dog, an attention appreciated with humility. But the dog returned to the hand hanging over the bed's edge.

An hour later Mr. Payser extinguished the gas in Oliver's room, and sauntered into the small library to smoke and dawdle over a book, dropping it after awhile to throw poker dice with himself until the heavy breathing of Oliver in the next room made him nervous and then drowsy.

So, for the first time in many nights, Mr. Payser retired to the front bed-room, locked the apartment, and went to bed, where he wooed sleep with a coy persistency that had its effect on that shadowy goddess.

The bells of the night tolled the birth and death of Time; a fine rain fell through a mist that stretched its spectral tent from river to river.

Under it the fog horns on the harbour sounded in heavy concord till dawn touched the watery waste with its grave, grey silence.

Oliver began to dream at dawn, and through his troubled dreams the river-horns blew, breathing of distant seas and salt spray flying.

The wind rose with the sun; the mist-choked square heard it among the tree-tops, souging, breathing of meadows and young forests; the sparrows heard it, promising blue skies and silver

shoals of clouds ; Oliver heard it, sleeping, and the nearness of the waking world troubled even his slumber—so hard had it been for him, so bitterly had he come to know it.

Yet for a while he clung to the fringes of the dark sleep-veil as it lifted from him ; half-awake he heard the sparrows chirping ; he heard the hum and rumour of life from distances and heights and depths ; he felt the trembling of solid things, deep bedded, shaken by hidden powers scarcely exerted.

Into his dream came the iron monster, the terrible symbol of the city that had crushed him ; his ears rang with clanging iron, his head swam under the terrific blows of sound ; and the dreadful thing came creeping into his dream, a vast living organism, all ribs : a hideous skeleton of metal, sweating rust, redder than blood, and moving, moving inexorably on him with iron bones creaking as it moved.

The shroud of sleep lay heavy on his breast, and the dream-cry died in his straining throat.

Toward noon he awakened. There was sunlight on the wall, and on the window ledge a sparrow chirping.

Later, a few minutes perhaps,—or hours, or, perhaps, days, there came a man who sat beside him silently, vanishing at times, but always reappearing, silent, seated.

CHAPTER XI.

AN IRON ALTAR.

In which Oliver suspects that he is endowed with a sixth sense.

WHEN Oliver was well enough to know that he had been ill, the first fresh breath of September had turned the maples in Washington Square to a golden green and spotted the bronzed elm leaves with ashy purple.

He no longer occupied Payser's rear bed-room ; he had a room of his own facing the square, a small affair dingily furnished, and for which he was expected to pay a few dollars a month.

He was well enough to sit by the window and watch the children at play around the fountain—indeed, he wished to go out into the park, but Payser had taken away his shoes as a precaution, and there was nothing to do but fret or make the best of it.

He fretted a great deal ; he was amazed and indignant when Payser handed him the check for the serialisation of "The Winged Boy," but when he remembered that the money made him independent for the time being, and when he understood the delicacy of Jack Payser's motive in disposing of

the serial rights to the *Argus* while he lay delirious with typhoid-malaria, penniless among strangers, he began to realise how much he owed to Jack Payser.

The worth of a thing is best known by the want of it; and Oliver, at his window on the top floor of the Monastery, looked out at the healthy people hastening to their stations throughout the city where the strife for life was renewed with the morning sunshine and the factory whistles sounded the assembly from the Battery to the Bronx and from the Sound to the sea.

Oliver believed that the world owed him a living; it takes an expert to find out how insolvent the world is. The older the creditor the less he is willing to accept on the dollar from that battered old bankrupt and habitual repudiator, the world.

Except for his desire to rise on his hind legs and butt the world again, he was comfortable enough. His meals were sent to his room from Spinkle's, his bill there was very small, and the doctor's bill was nominal. Both could be paid with the money from his "Winged Boy," leaving him nearly a hundred and fifty dollars. As for the rent, Payser told him to dismiss the idea of any such tribute until the end of the year brought the agent to exercise the functions of his unhallowed office.

Oliver had visitors: Weyward sauntered in one day to find him sitting sulkily by the window, reading the latest installment of "The Winged Boy" in the *Argus*. They examined each other silently

for a moment, then Oliver laughed outright and Weyward grinned, although neither could detect anything particularly ludicrous in the situation.

Weyward's grim smile seemed to say: "Well, young man, you've made your own bed;" and Oliver's defiant laugh meant, "Yes, and I enjoy lying on it, too."

Weyward's malicious smile softened; Oliver's face was too thin, too pallid for sarcasm.

"I've grown a thicker hide since I saw you," said Oliver, leaning his head on his colourless hand; "I accepted a stranger's invitation to have fits in his apartment at his expense."

"Jack Payser is a good fellow," said Weyward briefly.

He took a chair by the window and lay back, his pleasant eyes taking in the meagre details of the room and furniture.

"Last night," he said, glancing across at Oliver, "there was another *fête chez moi*. Two people were plainly looking for you."

"Who?" asked Oliver.

"Oh, a little married woman whose fan smells of mignonette—for one."

"And who plays the harp?"

Weyward nodded.

"And the other?" asked Oliver.

"Dulcie Wyvern."

After a silence Oliver raised his head from his hand, looking curiously at Weyward as though he would ask a question indiscreetly. Perhaps Weyward

understood ; at any rate he shrugged his shoulders, saying carelessly that he had not added to his collection of slippers.

"That is," he corrected himself, "I received a present of a pair of snowshoes from Montreal, but—I am not collecting snowshoes."

"Once," said Oliver, "there was a child who began a collection of icicles. He started to search for specimens in July but tired of it before winter."

Weyward reddened, then laughed.

"Your oracle is interpreted," he said ; "I hunt happiness in youth and tire before age, and odds to a penny I'll try collecting primroses in December."

He rose and strolled around the room, inspecting its native nakedness.

"I've been in worse shanties," he said ; "I'm worth more money than I want now. Good heavens ! money getting is not difficult. The world is too easy to live in. Money ? Anybody can make money ! I find it in bath-tubs."

He faced Oliver with a serious smile that was only partly mocking :

"Starve while you can !" he said ; "you'll never laugh with a freer heart than when your stomach is empty. Poverty can't last forever ; ease and competence are sneaking after you now. Stave 'em off ! Push 'em back ! Enjoy your poverty while you can !"

Oliver, much amused, lay back in his ragged armchair, laughing until a faint flush of healthy blood gathered on either sharp cheek bone.

"Money!" continued Weyward, a trifle more earnestly, "I don't care who borrows or steals it from me—but don't touch my fads and tell me fables that teach me I'm futile. I'm a lonely man, Lock, lonelier, perhaps, for my friends. But I'm glad of company—I can't live without it—anything is welcome at times—even women. I'd welcome Black Care as a companion to link arms with if he'd only follow me. But I go alone—always. Even Black Care rides the other way to pass me."

Neither spoke again until Weyward picked up his hat and gloves.

"I was not serious," he said pleasantly. "Too many icicles in July would make the search uninteresting."

"Yes," said Oliver, "and—can't you find that things are as well worth while as I find them?"

"Oh, I do, I do, indeed," said Weyward; "don't for a moment fancy me blasé."

He offered his hand and said good-bye, pausing in the hallway to add: "Dulcie Wyvern asked me where you lived. I was right in avoiding a reply, I fancy?"

"Yes," said Oliver, not knowing what else to say.

Now that was a strange request for Dulcie,—no, it was not strange at all, it was perfectly simple; and either Weyward's refusal to reply to an innocent question—or perhaps Oliver's own fancy had made an incident out of nothing.

Oliver lay in his big chair all day, watching the bronzed foliage, the white marble arch, the fountain

reflecting a sky of intense blue. The voices of the children in the square came up faintly to his high window, the whir of wheels, the clink of hoofs were not unpleasant to him.

But something had come into his thoughts that alternately interested and irritated him ; at any rate it annoyed him that Weyward should have found a meaning in nothing—a passing word of inquiry—courteous or idle.

“ To have told her where I lived would have been harmless ; to evade an answer gave a fictitious importance to an idle inquiry,” he thought. And all the while his eyes followed the little children playing around the fountain where the pool, set with blue lotus and papyrus bloom, reflected a sky now deepening to royal purple.

He had meant to ask Weyward a question or two about Dulcie, but he did not care to be misinterpreted. His curiosity ceased with Dulcie ; he had almost forgotten Violet Highlands and Sylvia and Mazie ; and the scent of mignonette itself was less vague than his recollection of her whose fan exhaled it.

Toward evening a waiter with colourless hair, and skin like the epidermis of an infant pig, arrived from Spinkle's with a tray.

Oliver ate his dinner slowly, eyes still following the grey forms of the children playing in the twilight of the square ; and he had finished and flung himself back in the easy chair before Payser appeared with a cheerful greeting.

"Hello! Is Spinkle's fodder all right? You'll be out in a day or two, I fancy. By the way, I hear people in Park Row are talking about 'The Winged Boy.' That's the entering wedge, Oliver; let them say anything about you as long as they say something."

"What *do* they say?" asked Oliver, brightening up;—"and who said it?"

"I'll not prevaricate," replied Payser with traces of gratification; "that heavy lady who does the book notices for the *Daily Spy* says your story is 'tainted with shallow perversity'—which probably signifies something hellish."

"Who is she?" asked Oliver, wincing.

"Her name," said Payser, "is Mrs. Bottom. A respectable wet nurse might hold similar literary convictions. However, hers is not the tribune of last resort."

"But she is the critic on the *Daily Spy*—I tell you, Jack, that stings."

"Do you mean to tell me," said Payser, "that the literary opinion of Mrs. Bottom distresses you? Why, man, nobody who writes cares what the Bottoms of literature think!"

"I do," said Oliver.

"No, you don't!" cried Payser; "I won't let you! Do you imagine anybody's literary career was ever affected by the criticisms of respectable wet nurses of either sex? Good heaven, man, pity the country that exhibits them in its literary tribunes but don't

take them more seriously than tabbies at a cat show!"

Oliver laughed, saying he never imagined that any well-meaning old lady could have made him feel unhappy about his work.

"It's my first criticism, you know; I fancy I shall take it less seriously a year hence," he said; "but to me the *Spy* is a very formidable enemy. A pat on the back helps a fellow so much when he takes his first step—and——"

"Pat on the back! You'll get a club on the head for your first step," said Payser. "Do you fancy anybody cares whether you fall and break your neck with your first step? And those few in the land who write stories, too, or who criticise because they can't write,—do you suppose it pleases them to see you taking any steps of any kind? 'Ware brick-bats! And let me inform you at once that neither critic nor author cares to have you succeed, and national pride in a fellow countryman's effort cuts no figure with critic, author or public. Strange, isn't it, when we have so few—so few Americans to take pride in? Strange, too, because critic and mob are eternally howling for native talent and American authors and the great American novel. But, Lord! Oliver, our critics are all Bottoms, our authors toady to them, our public have nothing to gauge high standards by, and—well, you know what our publishers are."

"Publishers—yes," said Oliver, thinking of Byron's nasty epigram; "but, Jack, you needn't tell me

that my brother authors wish me ill, and you need not expect me to believe that all critics are Bottoms any more than all Bottoms are critics. As for the public, you idiot, it takes our own people to appreciate what is good here and abroad, and there's more than one nation waits for its cue from public opinion in America."

"Which is all very fine," said Jack Payser, "and your opinion will certainly be strengthened if the American public take to you."

"It will," said Oliver serenely.

"Meanwhile," continued Jack, "I heard more opinions expressed about 'The Winged Boy.' Want to hear some?"

"Go on."

"Marc Zisco, the English critic, who, Tom Fydo says, is sure to ghetto-way with his share of American dollars, said that the boy who wrote 'The Winged Boy' was a boy winged, and badly, too. Of course he's clever, but it's no sport to kick a badger in the bag. The Gentile at least draws the game before the hounds pitch in. But that's a question of white skins and red sporting blood; and a dog that stands rabbits will throw a litter that stands cats. Want another's opinion?"

"Yes," said Oliver, feeling very unhappy.

"Pimly Pynt, editor of Klaw's *Manuscript Magazine*, says that 'The Winged Boy' is a most unimportant contribution to literature but might be popular in Painted Post sewing circles. I have the clipping; do you care to see it? Here is the

clipping from Mrs. Bottom and here's the child of the Ghetto's epigram. Here's one more from Sidney Jaune,—an editorial in the American edition of *The Pink Rat*, which I fancy, from its aroma, is not only pink but pinked."

"But," said Oliver, "Sidney Jaune's opinion is as important as Henry James."

"Exactly ; it's the same opinion. Every opinion that Sidney Jaune ever held in trust is just as important as when first presented to him by Henry James."

The mocking acrid humour of Jack Payser struck a discord in Oliver's heart. His sneer at all that Oliver unconsciously respected left the same hurt impression that Weyward's irreverence for Dawson Klaw had left. He read Sidney Jaune's unfavourable fling at "The Winged Boy" in silence, then he read the other clippings, sick at heart.

"Sidney Jaune writes perverted stories in James jargon and Paris patois. Marc Zisco criticises old English in old clo' English ; Pimly Pynt writes brilliantly and steers pretty close to blackmail ; and good old Mrs. Bottom adores Corelli and Lang and doesn't like Maeterlinck. There's an array for you, Oliver ! I fancy you're still in the ring."

"Yes," said Oliver, "I'm still in the ring."

He went to bed early that night, but it was useless for him to think of sleep.

Even dreaming, he saw the blunt splay thumb of Zisco thrust at him, he saw Mrs. Bottom nursing Sidney Jaune and a pink rat at the same time,

while she wagged her head at him and made faces.

He awoke laughing; it was scarcely past midnight. He went to the window where, beneath the motionless mass of dark foliage, the electric lights spread eccentric shadows over grass and asphalt. Above the trees in the north, the round illuminated dial of the police-court clock stared like a local moon; and, in the west, he saw the incandescent cross, above the Memorial Church, burning in the sky. Lights moved along black streets where cabs passed between double rows of dim gas lamps, stretching into perspective as far as he could see; the white arc-lamps along the noble avenue turned the arch to a monument of snow, over which the snowy eagle, with carved pinions outstretched, hung crucified, a victim to the ignorance of a race that learns only through crucifixions.

At first, as he leaned there from the open window, he found the silence grateful. Then little by little he became aware that the silence was comparative, not absolute, for the ceaseless thrilling undertone of metal vibrating, grew as he listened. It was always present; the fable of silence could have no meaning here, even for madmen; the air was never still, never a moment's suspension of the iron thrill could be hoped for in the iron city, and they who searched for silence must have its parody for their pains.

Yet the metallic rhythm was not ungrateful, and, if it was a symphony to silence, it was also silence in-

carnate compared with the din that rang when the iron monster was awake and thrashing with all its million metal arms.

As Oliver stood there, the wind rose, setting the wires and cables overhead humming. Something in the steel-stringed sweep of the chords found faint responses in his heart; he looked up into velvet midnight, he looked out into the city. There it sprawled, hideous, rusty, unsymmetrical, as though a Titan in his wrath had ripped the works from the bowels of some gigantic engine and piled them pell-mell over the island of Manhattan.

He remembered how the city had seemed to him—a monster, horrible, not even human enough to be cruel, but only a dreadful, senseless automaton, predestined to pass over him, crush him, and pass on.

Already his fear of the city had given place to an indescribable pleasure in it,—a kindliness that changed to sympathy, and even now had grown to proportions that presaged civic affection.

He was learning something important too,—he discovered that existing measures and standards had no application here; proportion, reticence, symmetry, beauty, in their accepted and strictured definitions, were terms that either had no meaning in this monster city or at least needed new interpretations.

Here was a new scale to be applied to new harmonies, new chords whose harmony was immensity. It needed a sixth sense to distinguish what the

most delicate of ears and eyes found discordant, and that sixth sense, germinated through inspiration, was a matter of self-cultivation and intense belief in its existence. Belief alone should be the key unlocking this young mystery, this work of men's hands inscribed with a deeper meaning, this iron altar scarring the shores of the new hemisphere. And this altar, raised by men whose minds bore no memories of the older and gentler civilisation, and whose standards were the standards set by nature in a hemisphere of wildernesses—this altar had been builded with bleeding fingers, brick on brick, steel walling steel, conforming to no standard save what nature had set before them, in their continent,—vastness, height, immensity.

* * * * *

The flaming cross above the church sank to a cinder and went out.

It was dawn.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MONASTERY.

A chapter admitting that we all have sufficient fortitude to tolerate the imbecility of others.

IN the Monastery the Abbot had called the brethren to prayerful consideration of impending calamity ; they assembled at sundown in the large tarnished apartment of Monsieur le Comte Rasta de Camp to prepare measures of resistance. For the common enemy, who came disguised as an agent, had been seen the day previous, surreptitiously reconnoitering the Monastery from behind a tree in the square opposite, and the tribute due him had been long, long overdue.

The Abbot, otherwise Tom Fydo, was a rosy stout gentleman of forty with the jolliest of smiles, handsome pleasant eyes, and a grey moustache that rather suggested the fighting lay brother. Talented, clever, often witty, and always amusing, he had the roving, adventurous disposition and inconvenient honesty that has set the free-lance in his stirrups from the days of Don Quixote to the time of Cecil Rhodes.

The Abbot sat in his chair, smoking a cigarette and noting the names of the monks who entered the faded apartments of the Count Rasta de Camp.

The Count was there, muddy skinned, badly ventilated, wearing a rose in a suspicious frock coat and several stains on his baggy lavender trousers.

"However," said Mora Lessly to Oliver, "he's re-trimmed his cuffs,"—a curiously mean remark for a wit. Yet, when not busied in being witty, wits are pitifully witless.

Ramon Quesada, Vice Consul for Yucatan, sauntered in, a handsome, graceful man whose black, curly hair was tipped with silver,—in fact all his personal property appeared to be similarly adorned, including a silver-mounted cane and a very silvery inlaid cigarette holder. Nevertheless, it was unmistakably the gentleman who bowed with scrupulous impartiality, who spoke with courtesy unfailing to Count Rasta de Camp, whom he disliked, who, when Oliver was presented by Jack Payser as a novice in the brotherhood, offered his slender, dark-skinned hand with the simplicity that gentle breeding alone can understand.

Sidney Jaune of *The Pink Rat* was there, a lank, round-shouldered, unhealthy fellow with eyes like the eyes of a homeless cat and long arms that dangled when he was silent and jerked when he spoke. He spoke a great deal in eager tones inlaid with a jargon one hears among newly arrived American students in the Latin Quarter. Many supposed him to be a Jew. He had a guest with him, a disreputable lawyer named Dyke Van Shuyster.

Dick Trivol arrived with little Willy Tockingham.

The latter, a sickly, large-headed youth who had recently published a book of verses under the reassuring title of "Nightmares," and was now investigating some pest-holes in the city for further inspiration, came forward modestly to meet Oliver, and conducted himself with an affected self effacement that was in contrast to *The Pink Rat's* brassy declamations where the theme was I, my or mine, me, and at rare intervals, we, our or ours, us.

"Well," said Sidney Jaune, coming over to Oliver, "you're one of those young authors who are going through the process of flaying!"

"You certainly ought to know," said Oliver, thinking of the paragraph in *The Pink Rat*. He did not speak resentfully, although, a week earlier, had he met Mr. Sidney Jaune, he would probably have pulled what little nose Providence had given to that eminent man.

There may have been something in Oliver's eyes that Sidney Jaune noticed, for those whose courage is not in proportion to their spite, watch effects very closely. Possibly Sidney Jaune divined what might have been, for he laid himself out to be polite to a degree that is only inspired by sudden hatred born of fear.

So they chatted very amiably together, and Mr. Jaune told Oliver all about the men who continued to arrive singly or in little groups to take council for the common safety.

There was a handsome, dark-eyed young fellow standing by the door, and Oliver asked his name.

With an indescribable sneer Mr. Jaune said he didn't know him but supposed he was a Jew named Ivan Lacroix, who painted nothing of importance for Jews of less importance.

"Why," said Oliver, "I understood you also came of Jewish blood."

With a ghastly smile Sidney Jaune said that Oliver had been misinformed, and presently he went away, leaving Oliver uncomfortable. Sidney Jaune might or might not have been a Jew; probably he was not, although he had that frightful intolerance for the race that flames most fiercely in apostates.

As for Oliver, loyalty was the keystone of his unformed character, and had he been Jew or Turk or Congo negro he would have found his pride in the blood that flowed in his people's veins.

He saw both Trivol and Payser shake hands cordially with Ivan Lacroix and presently he also met him and was pleasantly impressed with his quiet reserve.

But now the Abbot was rapping for attention and the brethren were finding chairs and Count Rasta de Camp had posed against a tarnished mantel with that latent negligence that characterised d'Orsay in his palmiest days.

"There was," said the Abbot with dignity,

"—a young man who said, nit!

No rent do I pay—not a bit.

I'm a jay if I pay!

And he was, in a way,

When they sent him his notice to quit."

The tragedy of the young man was deeply appreciated; even Count Rasta de Camp beat his soiled finger tips together and said "hear! hear!" with languid enthusiasm.

"Zey say," said Count Rasta de Camp,
"Zat ze Abbot will pay
To-morrow, to-day, or—someday
At some date after date,
But ze ruinous rate
Of discount explains his delay—"

The gibe at the Abbot's known weakness for cashing notes at any sacrifice was received with amusement.

"Still," observed the Abbot gravely,
"I think we should pay on account
A nominal modest amount—
Produce the piaster
To stave off disaster
And further remarks from the Count—"

A tumult followed, punctured by shouts of; "No rent!" and the Abbot tinkled his bell in vain. At length, it was decided to pay a small sum on account. This decision was, however, arrived at after the Abbot had consulted the fat little lawyer, Van Shuyster, a gentleman rarely sober enough to offer any opinion on anything. So, following Van Shuyster's advice to pay something, the brethren present were individually assessed in proportion to the amount outstanding against them. This proceeding drew forth moans from the Count, who finally borrowed the amount required from Oliver, a loan

predestined to repudiation,—and Oliver had been warned too.

There was always a feast after such meetings, and, in that Monastery, both refectory and feasts were movable. John Spinkle was caterer, the Abbot presided, flanked by the Vice Consul of Yucatan and Count Rasta de Camp. The others took what chairs were nearest, and Oliver found himself seated between Ivan Lacroix and a meagre young artist named Veeder, who was languidly patronising to men and things. He patronised the butter, calling Oliver's attention to it as "a swell bit of colour"; he referred to a radish as an "amusing note"; he insisted on regarding the Abbot's merry visage as merely "a value," until a biting sarcasm from that gentleman drove his attention to feeding.

Oliver was relieved when Veeder ceased to paint master-pieces in the air with a lean inverted thumb, and he got on very well with Ivan Lacroix, who, although nobody suspected it, was painting a masterpiece on canvas somewhere near the skylight of the Monastery.

"The trouble is," said Ivan, "one of my models joined a variety show on the road and I expected to repaint the figure until a young girl came to me last week, quite by accident. She is the prettiest model I have ever seen—quite innocent and serious."

"I fancy they sometimes are," said Oliver.

"Yes—sometimes. I hope you might care to see

the picture—you are very welcome ; I am always in my studio.”

“That Sheeny,” said Sidney Jaune to Mora Lessly, “is *bras dessus bras desous* with young Lock.”

“Brother,” observed Lessly, “thy tail hangs down behind.”

And to this Mr. Jaune was compelled to laugh because few cared to obtain the animosity of Mora Lessly.

The Abbot was waving a mug and chanting an anthem not at all Gregorian ; the Vice Consul of Yucatan followed his toast with a courteous cup to the United States, after which Sidney Jaune mandered on for some moments about the mission of *The Pink Rat* until he lost everybody’s attention in the excitement of what promised to be a personal encounter between Count Rasta de Camp and Mora Lessly.

Count Rasta de Camp was angry, very angry. Now there is nothing known to man so ludicrous as an angry Frenchman unless it be that same individual in a moment of great grief.

It was the shouts of laughter that stopped the carnage, and the Count thought the laughter was for Lessly and Lessly thought the Count was the object of derision. Later the Count shed a few tears at Lessly and all was joyous again, and the blond waiter from Spinkle’s with the complexion like an infant pig’s brought in another baby keg of Wurtzburger, which threatened to consummate the

destruction of Mr. Veeder, already in a gluttonous torpor from over feeding.

It was the custom of the Monastery on similar occasions to receive in some designated studio the worldly of the gentler sex. Each monk invited whom he chose with due regard to the prejudices of the guests invited by his brother monks. They were young women who wrote for the daily papers, others who adorned the metropolitan stage and concert halls, some who painted, some who sang, some who composed fashionable garments and hats; others still who were about to do something for a living and had not yet decided what to do but were waiting for suggestions.

An invitation to the Monastery was a thing to be desired; the very word "Bohemian," draws certain sorts of people as sugar draws cockroaches.

So when the Abbot arose and began the regular benediction:

"I am a Bohemian," the cheers drowned his voice.

"I am a Bohemian," he repeated; "nothing that I say or do is real and I myself am a myth, credited only by those who read about me——"

And the invariable time-honoured formula was pronounced to its finish, the "Merry Monk" sung in chorus,—falsely by the Count, whose voice was over-fond and husky—and the brethren separated to dress, the rendezvous being fixed for ten o'clock at the studio of the unfortunate Trivol, who bewailed his misfortune aloud:

"It's not much of a studio, but they'll break things and spill 'em on the floor; it's not much of a floor, I know, but it's all I have to stand on."

Oliver's evening dress being recently rescued from the custody of one Emanuel Dinglebaum, was in no condition to play its rôle, although, and the paradox is its own explanation, the clothes were certain to shine on Oliver's back.

"For clothes," observed Jack Payser, mounting the cold, black stairway with Oliver, "the ladies you'll meet care little and wear little."

"That's peculiarly unattractive to me," said Oliver; "I trod the path of the calf some years ago."

"Pooh," said Jack, "you're not at the end yet—don't tell me! I simply pay out more rope when the path seems to end. Come on! Come on!"

"Nonsense," said Oliver, hanging to the shaky banisters. "I'm going to my room. Haven't you had enough frivol for one night?"

"No," said Jack frankly, "and I never had enough in all my life—only at times I have indigestion. You'll come, now, won't you? It's not an orgie—but one makes very pleasant acquaintances sometimes——"

"Don't want pleasant acquaintances," said Oliver laughing; "let go, Jack! I had that sort of thing *ad nauseam* when I was a calf on the *rive gauche*. *Allons fiche moi la paix, hein! je me sauve!*"

Sidney Jaune, who, sniffing up from the floor below, caught the savour of Latin Quarter French,

charged up stairs to patronise the fluent orator, but Oliver escaped him and his jargon.

However, it was a case of frying-pan and fire, for, on the top floor Oliver ran plump into Dick Trivol escorting three young girls in evening gowns, and the delighted chorus of recognition left him no doubt of the identity of Mazie McNair, Sylvia Tring and Violet Highlands.

Was Oliver coming? No, he was not. Would he come? No, he would not. And why had he not called, and why had he made vain promises, and was he not horridly distant and formal? He was, he was! But it came from hereditary inability to appreciate the blessings Fortune showered upon him.

"There's champagne in my studio, and a punch—not much of a punch," said Trivol.

It was probably more of a punch than was good for Violet Highlands, for she laughed continually and said that Oliver was "perfectly lovely," encouraged by Sylvia, who added that he was distinctly "cute,"—a remark that made him feel like resting quietly somewhere behind a locked door.

But they were gay, and bent on mischief, and they insisted on locating Oliver's room, promising him visits at unseasonable hours and threatening instant invasion amid gales of pointless laughter.

"It isn't that he's shy," said Mazie, "he's spoiled—but I don't wonder——"

"Let's catch him and hug him!" suggested Sylvia.

However, to their astonishment, Oliver leaned over the banisters, swung Sylvia off her feet, coolly kissed her, and told her to run away and play.

"If life was not so important just now," he said, "I'd make it interesting for you all." And, with a polite but malicious smile he vanished into his own room, leaving three flushed and nonplussed young girls on the stairs.

An hour later, sitting at his dingy writing table, the tumult in Trivol's studio grew loud enough to disturb his thoughts. But he never resented merri-ment in others; he laid down pencil and pad, content to wait until the jollity subsided.

It did not subside. Count Rasta de Camp sang fond songs in a fond and tearfully tremulous voice, piercing when a climax occurred, like the squeal of a passionate rat. Then there were choruses and the double grunt of a 'cello and a clamorous picking of treble banjo strings and the whoop of a throaty soprano.

Ivan Lacroix came to his door, smiling, both hands over his ears:

"*C'est trop à la fin*—I couldn't stand it—not but what I found it most delightful—only my serious little model turned up there. I was disappointed——"

"I know," said Oliver, also smiling, "but there's so much else to think of. Will you come in?"

"Thank you—I was going to my studio; there's

an idea for a composition bothering me. But I won't talk shop——”

“Talk it!” said Oliver; “talk shop all the while, everywhere, anywhere! It's the only thing worth talking!”

They sat late together, and Oliver listened to an artist in words tell of his art on canvas.

Toward midnight Ivan went away with a quiet good-night; and the silence and void he left behind was slowly filled with a din from below, vaguer now, and more vinous.

The tumult in Trivol's studio was not dying out by any means; flotsam and jetsam from the feast floated up stairs and stranded outside his door,—Jack Payser and Mazie McNair, demanding admittance, Dick Trivol and a strange young lady who sang an insipid song through the key-hole in a fresh, uneasy voice,—complimentary if unseasonable—but irksome to a man who was thinking of something else.

Sidney Jaune came, somewhat drunk, and said impudent things in undiscovered French until somebody pushed him into his own rooms and locked the door on the outside.

“It's me,” said Payser with superb indifference for the popular prejudice concerning pronouns;—“It's me and I'm having a good time, old fellow,—and there's a vision in pink on the stairs who shall be mine, and there's a vision in white—I forget where—she'll be mine too—and the whole place is full of visions——”

Here he ceased abruptly; it is possible that other visions weaned him away; at any rate Oliver heard nothing more from Jack Payser that night.

With the passing of Payser the carnival subsided, that is in volume. There were cinders left, however, the ashes of the revel were not yet cold, but Oliver could take up pencil and pad again, to sit, idly marking circles and squares on the white paper, absorbed in an idea that was slowly becoming not only a possibility but a desire.

It was the imperative necessity of attacking a theme, and the theme was the iron city.

Who had sung its splendid discords, its superb squalour, its magnificent insignificance? Who had proclaimed its reason, its purpose?

Who had painted its arid vastness, its iron immensity,—who had unmasked its face,—this Caliban incarnate, this spawn of Setebos, — whose hideous face itself was but a mask for others to unmask and find another mask of iron below?

What was it—*what* was it, then, this iron city—a thing to be reduced to type—a problem to be solved by rote and rule—a phenomenon to be recorded where dry fools sucked dry statistics from volumes laboured on by dryer fools? What was it—a sheet of definitions, a pamphlet of names, a record of street on street, numbered inanely, a chart of a million homes builded above a maze of sewers, a recital of church, tower, spire, dome, bridge, canal, rivers and bays and the unnumbered sea-waves hastening to the port of a thousand sails?

What was it—*why* was it? Surely not for a plaything of those who made it—surely not for a sanctuary, a retreat, a calm rest from troublous toil,—witness the faces that look out of its myriad windows!—witness the human tides racing, ebbing, beating from the ocean to the Bronx!

Its reason? Mount to the highest white stone cliff, braced with iron girders, bricked brick on brick. Count the five Boroughs—Manhattan, Richmond, Queens, Brooklyn and the Bronx; and their reason is its reason, and its reason is the reason of the sea, set there to reflect the firmament and the stars, and to give burial to continents, and little ships full of merchandise and dead men.

The immensity of the theme appalled him, but he clung to it the more. The vastness, the almost hopeless variety, the absence of all that is established, of all that is typical, bewildered him, but he grasped the invisible chaos the tighter, and he set his heart to the relentless task.

“To believe,” he said aloud, “that the city has been here hundreds of years! and none have dared——”

There came a light tapping at his door.

As he touched the bolt a bell in the city sounded midnight.

No, he would not unbolt the door.

The last embers of the revel had not yet turned cold, for, silhouetted on the camera of his illuminated ceiling, grey figures flitted, projected from the hallway through the uncurtained transom; and

there were whisperings and sounds of hushed laughter from the dark flights of stairs outside.

The light from Trivol's transom streamed into the black, carpetless hallway; he looked at the long, thin beam from this beacon of folly, he listened to the muffled hum of voices, the faint clinking of glass-ware, the sudden gusts of deadened laughter, fitful as the rustle of dead leaves drifting. The invariable sequence of mirth and soberness, the inexorable pursuit of pleasure by sadness, the hopelessness of separating happiness into its three elements, hope, desire and melancholy, need trouble no one but him who saddens after dead-sea fruit.

Already the melancholy of dying mirth oppressed him; he wished the revel would end and leave him peace. Not that he was a pessimist—nor a cold ignorer of happiness. But he expected nothing more of it than it had ever held for him, neither was he surprised when it came, nor bitter when it passed him by. Its anatomy he knew little about, except the wistfulness of desire unfulfilled and the faith in its fulfillment. He knew happiness was real, he cared little to attempt its synthesis.

He was alone, sobered by his isolation and the great task he had set for himself. A man with a secret is never lonely, but he had even parted with his secret to Ivan; and never is a man more alone than when he imparts to another the secret of his ambition.

The homeless yellow dog which had followed him to Payser's room that night when he fell ill in the

square below, harboured temporarily by Trivol, came to the door outside and scratched diligently at the sill.

Christened "Grippe" by Jack in honour of the malady most unwelcome in the Monastery, the creature passed its days in endless attempts to re-join Oliver; and Trivol, finding blandishments, flattery and food unavailing, let the dog go where its heart inclined, which was to Oliver by the shortest cut. But Oliver did not want Grippe.

Judging by sounds, Grippe had undertaken to dig a tunnel under the door, so Oliver rose and prepared to admit the dog.

The hallway was lighted by the beam from Trivol's transom; Grippe rushed joyfully in, but Oliver did not close the door, for, outside on the landing stood a figure in white, quite motionless, eyes fixed on his.

"Dulcie," he said.

Grippe, who had been occupied in rushing around in circles to relieve the tension of a sentimental disposition, now undertook to climb skyward by way of Oliver. Failing in this, he took a ruffle of Dulcie's skirt in his mouth and started back into the room.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE STRIFE FOR LIFE.

*"In the mud and scum of things,
There alway, alway something sings."*

THE first hour after midnight sounded from the city spires ; the bell-strokes lengthened to a quivering monotone, lingering in sad vibrations through the room. Dulcie had not spoken ; she lay in the great chair beside the lamp-lit table, colourless fingers holding tight to the upholstered arms, eyes fixed on his shadowed face.

They had been there for half an hour in silence ; the dog curled up on the mat between them, nose buried in his rusty flank, humble eyes fixed on those two motionless people in the lamplight.

There was a stain of wine on Dulcie's evening-gown, crushed roses at her breast, and roses in her cheeks, too, but paler.

What stains her young soul bore since their last parting, he asked himself, at first ; then, impatient at pity where he could give no aid,—where he was too sensitive to offer that parody of aid called "good advice"—he waited for her to speak.

She began at last in timid commonplaces, telling

him of the studio she had just left, and of the evening's gaiety, venturing even to regret that he had not been there, and then, reminding him of Weyward's strange *fête*, and how she had searched for him and he for her, she spoke of the weeks since they had last met—of that hot morning in Long Acre when he had gone away, wearing her white flower in his coat.

"You stood a long while on the corner; I watched you from the window of your old room," she added.

He said nothing.

"You have been ill?"

"Yes."

She wished him to question her about herself; she was ready to tell; she needed the relief of accounting to somebody for all she had done.

He knew it; he understood perfectly what lines of unwritten tragedy were resolutely stifled by her wistful lips. But she could not speak without his cue, and he would not give the cue.

He could do nothing, offer nothing, be nothing to her; he dreaded to hear what was beyond his power to console or avert. Words avert nothing; consolation never provides for an hour ahead.

When again they had grown silent the stillness in the room became disturbing. Little sounds were magnified: the stealthy whisper of leaves under the roof, the breathing of the dog, the repeated thudding of a great moth against the window panes

outside, beating with soft wings for admittance.

The electric radiance silver-plated every pane ; tangles of clustered leaves swayed in shadow form across the white walls ; the lamp on the table burned lower, throwing a luminous circle on the ceiling, in the centre of which a blot of shadow trembled.

“What is it, Dulcie ?” he asked at last, knowing the question was utterly useless to her or to him. She answered, telling him all.

She did not use the word trouble—she did not complain. It was a story without romance, without originality in the telling. The details were commonplace, the minute details which she passed over must have been sordid. It was the story of an outsider among outsiders,—a chapter in the stale story of the unclassed.

It began when Mrs. Wyvern suddenly gave up her apartments and moved to an uptown street where somebody had thoughtfully provided a handsome house for her. There were servants, too, and a brougham, and a whole floor over-decorated for Dulcie.

There, also, Mrs. Wyvern had the opportunity of entertaining Mr. Dawson Klaw at dinner every evening, and Mr. Dawson appeared more at ease than when he used to tip-toe softly through the hallways in Long Acre.

Mrs. Wyvern gave her orders ; the servants, the blue dog, and Dulcie obeyed ; and one day Mr.

Dawson Klaw brought a guest to dinner, his brother, Mr. Magnelius, who said "Aha!" several times when he was presented to Mrs. Wyvern. He said nothing to Dulcie until a week later; and, when he did say something, Dulcie went to Mrs. Wyvern to ask why he had said it.

That night Dulcie left the house, and Sylvia Tring found her waiting outside the stage door at the Athenian Music Hall, tearless, dazed, faint with fatigue. She went home with Sylvia.

After a few days Mazie McNair, who had served an apprenticeship under the milliner, Armand, took her to that creator of straw and feather head-gear. There Dulcie sold hats to very grand ladies, aroused the jealousy of twenty-seven other saleswomen, procured the hatred of Miss Cohen, and misunderstood Monsieur Armand's effusive kindness until offered an opportunity which meant, among other questionable advantages, a permanent life of leisure.

There was a model needed at the celebrated cloak and mantle makers, Beetle Brothers, on Broadway. She stayed until the Beetles became intrusive.

Later she found a place in the chorus at the Athenian. She rehearsed with Sylvia and Mazie; the review was billed for October. She had gone to be measured for her costume, Azzimonti made her shoes, Pairo her wig, and she had been quite contented until Benjamin Grittlefeld, owner

of the Athenian, offered her a rôle beyond her ambition.

She was obliged to find something else to do ; Sylvia Tring had once sat for her portrait at exorbitant recompense ; Mazie knew artists at the Monastery. Coming alone one rainy day she had followed the stairway until it left her at Ivan Lacroix's door. She had posed for him, draped. He was very kind and absent minded.

"And then?" asked Oliver.

She raised her serious grey eyes.

"I mean—what are you to do when Lacroix finishes his picture?"

"I don't know," said Dulcie.

He looked at the young girl, at the crushed roses on her breast, the long mark of the spilled wine, the hands, smooth as a child's, idly interlaced among the lace and ruffles in her lap.

He rose ; the little dog rose too, following him gravely in his slow pacing to and fro before the windows.

Dawn whitened the edges of the night ; his lamp-wick had died to a coal, and the silver radiance of the arc-lights in the street bathed the whole room in a wash of silver, over which etched branches swayed.

He stood still a moment, watching the big moth fluttering outside the sheeted lustre of the panes.

"The lamp has gone out," he said ; "what draws that creature here?"

"There is another moth in the room—on the curtain," said Dulcie.

But Oliver took no pity on the persistent winged suitor and the window remained closed.

It was still starlight, though the eastern sky had bleached to grey when he walked with Dulcie through the empty park.

She had rooms with Sylvia and Mazie in a boarding-house facing the square; she told him that she needed nothing, knowing, perhaps, that what she had needed had been denied,—she asked him not to forget her, not to go away again without a sign to her; for she felt less alone in the city when she knew he was within call.

They stood on the cracked brown-stone steps together; she gave him her latch-key and he opened the door.

"Try to hold out, Dulcie; they're liars—every one!" he said.

"I know," she replied seriously.

"And—the danger is everywhere—*everywhere*—at Weyward's, at the Monastery, on the street, here in your own house—by day, by night,—you know it, Dulcie?"

"Yes—the danger——"

"Everywhere, from men—from the best of them particularly!"

"Yes."

They stood a minute together; she held tightly to his hands, saying that she feared nothing.

So he left her, his hands bearing the imprint of hers.

When again he came to his own room and flung up the windows for a breath of dawn, a big moth fluttered in, beating wall and ceiling with ragged wings.

CHAPTER XIV.

PARASITES AND PROTECTORS.

Showing how a man may sometimes be as different from himself as he is from his neighbour.

“THE Winged Boy” was issued in paper by Chatterton Mawly, publisher, New York, Sioux City, and Constantinople,—after it had been refused by every other reputable and disreputable publisher in New York.

Why Mr. Mawly came, how he came, and from whence, Oliver was never able to explain clearly.

In later years the coming of Mr. Mawly was always associated in his mind with a poem of Burns, the same being addressed to an insect on a lady’s bonnet.

The advent of Chatterton Mawly was mildly dramatic. It occurred one hot afternoon in September. “The Winged Boy” lay on Oliver’s table; Oliver lay on the shabby sofa, writing; the little dog, Grippe, lay around loose, watching shadows crawling on the wall.

When somebody knocked, Oliver sat up; so did the little dog, hostile eyes fixed on the crack under the door.

"Come in," said Oliver, adding under his breath, "shut up!" for Grippe's individual guidance.

The door opened; a puff of perfume entered, followed by Mr. Chatterton Mawly extending his card.

Even Grippe was nonplussed; Oliver invited his visitor to a seat, then glanced at the card. It was large and marbled, and distributed the following intelligence:

CHATTERTON MAWLY

PUBLISHER,

New York

Sioux City

Constantinople

Mawly's Monuments of Muscular Literature	{	cloth \$1.00
	{	paper .50

Oliver looked up to meet a pair of remarkable eyes, eyes that were all surface, variegated curiously like polished green malachite.

"I thank you for your courtesy," said Mr. Mawly; "I consider it an honour to be received by Mr. Oliver Lock, novelist!"

Oliver bowed his puzzled obligations.

Mr. Chatterton Mawly's clothes were interesting for their variety and newness, his necktie was a creation, his waistcoat much more than an inspiration. Adorned with jewelry, exhaling cologne, Mr. Mawly fairly crackled in his stiff pink shirt bosom, from the

centre of which a jewel shed a light that never was on sea or land.

But it was his face that puzzled Oliver, a flat, heart-shaped face, featureless, save for those polished eyes that were not transparent, not even translucent, but merely opaque green agates. It was true he had a nose; he also wore a pair of ears not ornamental.

His speech was studied; he used the word "courtesy" continually; he flourished a silk handkerchief wet with perfume until Grippe in his untutored innocence sneezed,—a proceeding mortifying to Oliver.

Gradually Mr. Mawly explained his visit; he wanted to pay Oliver five per cent as a testimonial of his admiration. Incidentally, in order to relieve Oliver of an effusive sense of obligation, Mr. Mawly proposed to publish "The Winged Boy," retaining ninety-five per cent of everything accruing from the investment.

"It is great," said Mr. Mawly; "commercially it is not valuable, perhaps, but I do not look for pecuniary returns; I am satisfied to have that book on my list; I am ready to pay for the honour of including your name among the authors represented in Mawly's 'Monuments of Muscular Literature.'"

He snatched a circular from his breast pocket and read dramatically:

"'Woody! Not Won,' by the author of 'Won! Not Woody!'"

"'Won! Not Woody,' by the author of 'Woody! Not Won!'"

“ ‘Pinkey’s Ordeal,’ by Mrs. Cawn-Craik.

“ ‘Cornelia’s Atonement,’ by the author of ‘Pinkey’s Ordeal!’

“ ‘Home Cook Book,’ by Mrs. Frye.

“ ‘A Woman’s Curse,’ by Mrs. Bogle.

“ ‘*The Winged Boy!*’ by *Oliver Lock!!!*

“ ‘Chatterton Mawly, Publisher, New York, Sioux City, Constantinople! Mawly’s ‘Monuments of Muscular Literature,’ cloth, one dollar, paper, fifty cents! Sold everywhere or sent post-paid on receipt of price!’”

“I think,” said Mr. Mawly with a perfumed smile, “no living publisher need blush for such a galaxy.”

“Indeed,” said Oliver politely, “but why should the author take five per cent and the publisher ninety-five? After all, the author writes the book.”

“He does—I am frank—he does!” said Mr. Mawly in an outburst of professional confidence. “But I am about to put hundreds and hundreds of dollars into your book, without hope of a return—merely for the sake of having your name on my list of famous authors included in Mawly’s ‘Monuments of Muscular Literature,’ cloth, one dollar, paper—”

“I know,” said Oliver; “I am inexperienced in such matters, but if I am only to receive two or three dollars on every hundred books you sell.”

Mr. Mawly’s opaque eyes stole around the shabby room.

“I need money,” said Oliver; “I hesitate for that reason.”

Mr. Mawly bowed in recognition of the superfluous information.

The problem of preserving cordial relations between soul and body was not likely to be solved through the publication of "The Winged Boy,"—Oliver understood that. Still he winced at the prospect of such meagre returns.

But there was another side—a view of the situation often fatal to the artist,—the longing for a public hearing at any sacrifice.

"In cloth," said Mr. Mawly, rubbing the solitaire on his finger with his coat sleeve, 'The Winged Boy' will be included in Mawly's Contemporary Classics—'The Third Sex' by the author of 'Was She a Woman?' 'Was She a Woman?' by the author of 'The Third Sex.' A chaste galaxy, Mr. Lock, ain't it!"

"Quite so," said Oliver, "but the royalty in that case will be in proportion to the increase in price, I suppose."

Mr. Mawly said "certainly" in an absent-minded manner,—a forethought that later might enable him to interpret the remark as "certainly not," if occasion arose.

"As for an agreement in writing,——" said Oliver.

"Between gentlemen?" asked Mr. Mawly, with eyebrows slightly raised.

"I always thought it customary in all matters of business," said Oliver.

Mr. Mawly disabused his mind of the importance

foolishly accorded to written agreements by a venal public.

“My ledgers,” said Mr. Mawly, “are always open to my friends. Our Mr. Welcher will personally interpret our system to our authors. You, Mr. Lock, understand the finer courtesy that prompts a publisher to take an author in—to throw open his ledgers to the only individual on earth who can sympathise with the publisher who dares ignore sordid routine of method. The high-souled author! I take off my hat to him!” said Mr. Mawly with a gesture as if to remove his heart-shaped head from its socket.

Even Grippe watched the result of this experiment with interest; however, Mr. Mawly skillfully modified the gesture to an all-embracing wave of his perfumed fingers. Grippe barked, then slunk under Oliver’s chair.

“Author and publisher!” continued Mr. Mawly sentimentally, considering Grippe with opaque malevolence; “what past glories the linking of those two names evokes!—what treasures of sympathy, what garlands of tradition, what monuments of success!”

“By ‘Monuments,’ perhaps he means headstones,” thought Oliver.

“Author—and—publisher,” reflected Mr. Mawly, mastering his natural emotion and flourishing his hat: “United they stand, divided they fall. Mr. Lock, I thank you for the courtesy of your attention. It is much to me that I have held the hand of Oliver Lock, Author!”

"When shall I call at your building?" asked Oliver, beginning to dislike Mr. Mawly.

"Hem!" observed Mawley,—“er—at present, pending the selection of apartments suitable for Chatterton Mawly, Publisher, New York, Sioux City, and Constantinople,—I am temporarily occupying offices on Union Square.”

He wrote the number in pencil and bestowed the card on Oliver with benevolence.

Oliver held the manuscript of “The Winged Boy”; he hesitated to let it go. But Mr. Mawly seized it with the playful abandon of a jackal, and hurried away, reeking with compliments and *peau d’Espagne*.

“Grippe,” said Oliver, to the little dog, “if it was not for his eyes I should feel that you and I have gained an inch or two toward the goal. I—I don’t like his eyes, Grippe.”

Grippe stood up and shook his ochre-coloured kinks.

“Come, Grippe!”

The little dog sprang into his arms, nestling close, brown eyes raised for further instructions.

There were none; Grippe subdued emotion and gazed out of the window, over the tops of the brown foliage, lighted to amber by the western sun.

Telegraph wires sagging, criss-crossed and interlaced by cables, spread a fine network over the sky as though some enormous spider had woven the city in his mesh. Like cobwebs, too, the pattern of steel strands, radiating into perspective, bore

shreds of refuse, rotten rags and paper wrecks of kites, tattered derelicts that the air currents entangled in the web, leaving them to dangle and flutter and slowly disintegrate.

The sparrows found a frail foothold on the wires; they passed the windows continually, perching to swing or to practice balancing on loose wires, then dropping into the air-gulf below, brown wings beating the golden air.

Grippe observed them with impartial defiance; he would have barked if he dared, but, on looking at Oliver to see how he might take it, decided to suppress the inclination for the present.

Lately there had come into Oliver's face the silent, intent expression that puzzles animals and men. Grippe noticed it; Jack Payser, Trivol, Weyward and the others had noticed it, too.

Toward sunset he opened his little book, reading at first in silence:

"Truth indeed came once into the world with her divine Master, and was a perfect shape most glorious to look on——"

How the splendid plea for liberty swept through his brain, taking shape on his lips in the music of the words! The great symphony roused him as trumpets fire a battle-driven animal; he set his chin on his clenched hands and stared hard at the heart of things. Strange that the art of seeing is a lost art, save to the self-taught.

Late in the afternoon Weyward strolled in, to lounge on the rusty sofa and speculate on Grippe's

pedigree, and pet the creature too; for the Anglo-Saxon, if he lacks the virtues of the dog, at least understands them, where the continental sympathises more naturally with the ape, and the oriental with the cat.

"Mixed blood—very," observed Weyward, gently rubbing Grippe under the ears, an attention deeply appreciated. "Oliver, where did you pick up this fellow Mawly?"

"He picked me up," said Oliver, already sorry that he had listened to Mr. Mawly.

"I fancy," said Weyward, "he's one of your fly-by-nights. Better drop him. Some bats are vampires too."

"I've given him the book."

"Take it back."

"And my word."

"Oh," said Weyward, "I'm sorry. Is it in writing?"

"No; but I've given him my word."

"Well, if it's given it's given—as far as you are concerned. But you had better get Mr. Mawly's word on paper."

Oliver shrugged his shoulders.

"I've sold bath-tubs enough to know the value of ink," said Weyward. "You'll learn later, I fancy, that books are business as well as bath-tubs."

He stood up to stretch his well-knit English frame; Grippe stood on his hind feet and placed both paws against Weyward's knee.

"Poor old chap," said Weyward, looking down;

“take care of your master; he has the wisdom of babes, and their capacity for taking care of himself. He looks tired too, Grippe.”

“Pooh,” said Oliver; “the truth is, I’m longing for a little amusement. I’ve gone stale; my ideas are cut and dried; I fancy I need a little frivolity. Did you ever feel as if you might blow up?”

“Listen to the apostle of self-suppression!” commented Weyward.

“If I had enough money,” continued Oliver savagely, “I’d enjoy squandering it all to-night. I’m tired of this damned grind. A man gets to a point, at times, where he’d annihilate the Decalogue!”

Weyward sat down and drew on his gloves, watching Oliver pace the room.

“Oliver,” he said, “money *is* easy to make; but you don’t know how. Now you are selling your book to a pirate who’ll never pay you a penny and you’re living on the money that Squimp paid for the serial rights. That can’t go on; you know it!”

“I know it,” said Oliver, sulkily.

“And,” continued Weyward, “you are up to your eyes in some new scheme,—I don’t know what. But you’ve got to live meanwhile, and I’m going to tell you how to do it whether you like it or not.”

Oliver laughed in a dry, disagreeable way. Weyward overlooked it.

“It’s this,” said Weyward; “last month a new illustrated weekly was born in town, *Zig-Zag*, and it’s going to be a success,—for a while. Eugene

Smith is owner and editor ; he pays absurdly high prices for pictures and writing, but that of course won't last. The paper is going to reach a high circulation mark, then Smith will drop every expensive writer and artist, making the same mistake that always wrecks papers of that sort. Then the paper will go to smash, be revived, go to smithereens, be patched up by some Jew, and finally drag along until nobody remembers whether it is alive or buried. Meanwhile salaries are high. Would you take your chances there? "

"What chance have I?" asked Oliver, sullenly.

"A good one," said Weyward, "if you could write a couple of columns a week of that brilliant badinage that your 'Winged Boy' is veined with. Could you? "

"I could."

"Would you? "

"Yes—for a living. I've got to live, for I've something important on hand——"

Weyward burst out laughing.

"If it is *very* important, you certainly must not think of dying just now! Oliver, would you get red in the face and walk around like a stork and crush my cordiality with the restrained politeness that means 'go to hell!'—if I told you that Eugene Smith offers you eighty dollars a week?"

"Thank you, Weyward," said Oliver. He could not trust himself to say more just then, for the kindness of Weyward had touched him very deeply.

How kind they were, all these young fellows who had closed around him when he stood in direst need! No longer ashamed to accept a favour done in a manly way, he only thought that such friendship was very pleasant—indeed, the pleasantest thing that life could hold for any man.

But, being a Yankee, he was careful to obliterate any trace of emotion before he thanked Weyward again, a delicate consideration intensely appreciated by the Englishman.

“Eugene Smith,” said Weyward, “is a big, beefy baby who pouts when he can’t have his own way. Let him have it, draw your salary, and—and do things,” he ended with a gesture that suggested achievements indescribable.

To sustain himself by a weekly contribution to *Zig-Zag* seemed delightful to Oliver. It left him time for his theme; it assured independence of action. Ah, but these friends of his were friends indeed,—Weyward with his idle, warm heart, Jack Payser, generous and devoted, Ivan Lacroix, absorbed yet absolutely unselfish,—even the others, Tom Fydo, Mora Lessly, Ramon Quesada,—yes, the tarnished Count who borrowed from him, *The Pink Rat* who squealed at him—all were good fellows—they were indeed!

He was very happy; his tired mind, heavy with the burden of failure and poverty, grew lighter. Care had been busy, starting the faintest tracery of fine lines under either cheekbone, and now, when he smiled, Weyward saw the lines and frowned.

"Come," he said, "let things go for to-day. We'll dine together. I'll ask Ivan, too."

"Indeed we will!" cried Oliver, with a jolly, care-free laugh that Weyward had never suspected him capable of. "I had no idea what a cursed strain this bread-winning was—but now, when the load is off my mind—why, I feel like all sorts of frisking lambkins."

"Flourish your heels; it will do you good," said Weyward, surprised and amused. "I had no notion that you could do anything so undignified and comforting. I'll be at the Café Regent at eight. Don't be late."

After Weyward had gone Oliver romped with Grippe before bathing and dressing, a wise precaution, for Grippe was acquiring a new winter set of furs, and he distributed his old set, hair by hair, over everything that came his way.

Presently, whistling like a school-boy, Oliver began to dress. The process of dressing is in itself so stupid that even those people not otherwise given to reflection, find that time favourable for serious thoughts on men and things.

With eighty dollars a week what could he not do? The delightful prospect of freedom from poverty, of time to investigate the city that he had chosen for his theme, gave him a pleasure that none but those released from hopeless, fruitless labour can understand.

He whistled gaily, buttoning his collar,—a lighted cigarette between his lips,—the first he had dared to enjoy for months.

Poverty already seemed far off ; the wolf's shadow faded from his threshold ; hope glimmered in the ascendant like a new moon.

There is a certain delicate intoxication that follows unexpected happiness. He was ready for anything that the evening might bring ; he revelled in the idea of facing the human tides that surged through the glitter of the gas-lit cañons ; he longed to plunge into that shadowy world of outlines and silhouettes and strange figures ; he longed to be one of them, to be of them and with them, to interpret their laughter and half-caught words, to laugh with those who laughed, there where lantern-lit portals swarmed with white faces half illuminated.

Ivan Lacroix came in as Oliver stood before the mirror retying his tie.

"I'll join you and Weyward at the Regent later," he said. "I'm a bit worried about my model, Miss Wyvern ; she hasn't been to the studio for two days."

Oliver looked up sharply, then completed the knot in his necktie.

"I'll stop at her boarding house," he said ; "I'm going out directly. Shall I tell her to come tomorrow?"

"If she will," said Ivan ; "but she won't."

"You don't think she's ill?" asked Oliver, brushing his coat hurriedly.

"No, I don't," replied Ivan.

Oliver put on his hat, eyes absently wandering from Grippe to the door.

"You feed him, Ivan," he said, "and I'll stop and see Miss Wyvern and find out why she has not been to your place."

"I think I know why she hasn't come to the studio," said Ivan, soberly.

"Why?" asked Oliver, unpleasantly startled.

"Because she has been staying with Sylvia Tring and Mazie, and that means late hours and too much champagne. Those three young ones have found the Count and Sidney Jaune amusing; I saw the whole outfit at the theatre last night. I don't know what to do exactly; I'm sorry to lose Miss Wyvern——"

"The little idiot!" said Oliver, surprised at his own anger. "I'll see what she is about, Ivan, and if I have any influence with her, you shall have your model again to-morrow. I'll join you and Weyward at the Regent about eight."

Now Dulcie Wyvern was certainly free to come or stay away as she pleased, and whatever she chose to do was none of Oliver's business, because he had never cared to make it so. That was his own affair, too. Yet now, when he found that she had drifted away without accounting to him, without even a word, he felt a curious resentment which was perfectly human and amusingly unjust.

As he went out into the square, the pleasure he might have taken in his new-found freedom from care and anxiety was marred. Dulcie marred it.

It was most unreasonable of him to feel hurt or slighted; he knew it and wondered why. Perhaps

it was the thought of the Count with his unhealthy skin and stale clothes, and his unhealthy mind and staler morals—Faugh! The tarnished squire of dames could follow the scent of the make-up rag but he must let Dulcie alone!

Had he not been a trifle excited he might have found his new rôle somewhat illogical. Since when had Dulcie found in him a champion, let alone a confidant? Had the prospect of financial ease permitted Oliver to accept the championship of a young girl he was sorry for? Was it common chivalry in him that resented the attentions of this tainted Count to any innocent woman? Or was it the old humanity in him that had remained unresponsive when confidence was offered and sulked when confidence sought other sympathies. At one time he might have been a great deal to Dulcie; but he would not give her advice where he could not give her aid; and, needing somebody to arbitrate for her between facts and emotions, she had drifted away from him, perhaps to another outsider less busy with life's battle.

It was dark on the steps of the shabby boarding-house, and Oliver, groping for the bell, walked into a man who was emerging from the vestibule.

“I beg your pardon,” said Oliver.

“Aha!—quite so—I beg yours! Aha!” panted the unknown, descending the steps with ponderous alacrity.

There could be no mistake; that soft, heavy gentleman, treading the pavement with the innate ma-

jesty of an elephant, was Mr. Magnelius Klaw ; and what he had been doing in Dulcie Wyvern's vicinity Oliver desired to know.

A slatternly child answered the bell ; Oliver climbed the unlighted stairs and knocked at Dulcie's curtained door, asking if he might enter.

Almost immediately he was aware that she was not alone ; there were whisperings, a suppressed laugh, the sound of an inner door closing ; then she admitted him.

He looked around without speaking ; the poor faded furniture, the single gas-jet, the musty engravings on the wall, were unchanged. He sat down, uninvited, wondering at his own increasing displeasure.

She had twisted her heavy hair into a coil, low in the neck ; a few strands hid the tips of her small ears. For the rest, she was dressed as usual in black, which increased the dead whiteness of her childish throat and hands.

"Ivan Lacroix wonders why you do not come," he said briefly. Even to him his own voice sounded unnecessarily dry.

"I wrote him why," she replied, surprised and hurt by his manner.

"When ?"

"To-night. He will get my note in the morning."

She spoke so coldly that he stood up, irritated and resentful.

"I don't think it would hurt you to save Ivan

two days useless waiting. When you cannot pose you can at least let him know."

"I am sorry," she said; "it was thoughtless."

His attitude pained and confused her. Had he come here to find fault with her for neglecting Ivan's picture? If so he might have done it in a kindlier manner; he had always been at least gentle if not particularly sympathetic. But now he seemed quite different; she had never seen him so animated, so unpleasant, so like other people.

"Am I detaining you?" she asked gently.

Immediately the simple question took on false significance for him. He shot a rapid glance at the closed door between her bed-room and the shabby parlour.

"Mazie is in there," she said.

He went to the hall door, determined to keep his own ideas to himself. After all, it was not his business to select her companions.

"Are you going to pose for Lacroix any more?" he asked.

Again she resented his tone and remained silent. That he had suddenly permitted himself an interest in her which assumed the proportions of a championship never crossed her mind. She knew he was poor and intensely absorbed in his own devices,—not at all like other men she knew—and much too poor and too occupied to permit the intrusion of her own unimportant personality into the fabric of his destiny. She had believed that he wished her well, that he held her in kindly esteem. His gentleness and

pleasant lack of vanity had been grateful to her. At one time, when he boarded at her mother's, she had built a pedestal for him, from which she had not yet removed him; and it alarmed her to believe he might descend wilfully.

"Dulcie," he said stiffly, "I once thought I'd never bother you with the mawkish imitation of friendship embodied in 'good advice.' But I'm going to. Keep away from the Count and Sidney Jaune."

"They always speak fairly of you behind your back!" flashed out Dulcie.

Heavens! her idol was climbing down to the ground of his own accord!

"Can't you understand it's for your own good?" said Oliver, impatient at being misunderstood. "You run foolish risks,—you are free, I suppose,—but I would like to know how I came to meet Magnelius Klaw on your door-step just now?"

"He calls sometimes," said Dulcie, a trifle paler; "he has asked pardon for what he said."

"Look out for him," said Oliver; "our 'best people' furnish the best criminals. We unclassed outsiders are usually more decent."

"He speaks well of your book," said Dulcie, desperately. What was he finding fault with? Why did he come to her to speak harshly of others—others who were pleasant and kindly and who found pleasure in her—others who were no worse, no more vain or selfish or importunate than she found all men, but who took her to theatres and music-halls and

suppers, and who sent her flowers and silver and sometimes rings, which, as yet, she instinctively returned, not knowing what hidden significance their acceptance might portend nor what gratitude was expected in return.

As for Oliver, he began to realise the rôle he had started to assume. He also realised that Dulcie no longer expected such an interest on his part, having waited so long in hope of a friendship dreamed of only by the very young.

"Can't you see," he said, "I am only trying to be a friend where your inexperience needs one?"

No, she could not understand; it was too late. He had changed, that was all she saw; he was hard and ungenerous to others where he had been good humoured and pleasant; he still retained his own unsympathetic individuality, but he had lost his gentleness for her, and now he confused and distressed her.

The misunderstanding was complete; neither cared to prolong an interview which had become painful, and Oliver was already descending the stairs with a curt good-night on his lips when the door below opened and Count Rasta de Camp, followed by Sidney Jaune, entered the house.

The Count smirked at Oliver, passing him with a leer, to pay his florid if not torrid respects to Dulcie.

"I am not dressed yet," she said; "go and sit on the stairs with Mr. Jaune. Mazie is doing her hair and we'll be ready in half an hour."

So they had come by appointment, *The Pink Rat*

and the Count! Oliver swallowed hard and descended the stairs with the two men, and Dulcie shut the door of her bed-room viciously, wondering why she felt so miserable.

"Off to view ze town?" inquired the Count languidly.

Oliver nodded, passing him.

"Looking for material?" suggested Jaune, with a sneer at Oliver's evening dress, a costume he affected to tolerate in others.

"Permit," said the Count, "zere is material for stories where zere are women, which is everywhere!"

Jaune added a slanderous epigram that amused the Count; Oliver opened the front door. He was half way out when the Count said something about either Dulcie or Mazie, he was not certain which, but the remark brought him back into the dimly-lighted hallway, and Sidney Jaune saw an expression in his face that he had once before noticed.

"I only want to say," began Oliver, "that I don't understand why either of you come here. However," he added, staring insultingly at the Count, "as long as she tolerates you, you may come."

The Count was too astonished to reply; Sidney Jaune turned a delicate yellow, and asked Oliver to explain himself.

"Very happy to, I'm sure," he said, cheerfully; "I mean that if either of you fail in deference to Miss Wyvern, you'll make a mistake."

Waiting a moment for a reply, and receiving none, he opened the door again.

“You, Monsieur,” he said to the Count, “have a singularly filthy tongue, even for a Gaul. Hold it in future when a gentleman honours you by his presence.”

The Count stood silent, perspiring with rage. After a moment Oliver went out, leaving the door behind him open.

CHAPTER XV.

OLIVER FURIOSO.

Proving that men are not disturbed by things, but by the view that they take of things.

SELF-DISGUST predominated as he recrossed the square. Here was a low quarrel with a pair of blackguards. Then the absurd aspect appealed to him—his warning to the precious pair without the sanction of the girl herself—nay, in the face of her rebuke for his officiousness. That it could only end in ridicule for himself was plain enough; he was ashamed to think of what he had done—of the construction that was sure to be placed on his interference by the Count and *The Pink Rat*,—perhaps by the girl herself.

“If ever I mix up in that sort of thing again!” he muttered.

He walked up Broadway to the Regent, breasting the crowd, bathing in the flaring gaslight, losing himself in the tide, as though self-immersion could rid him of self-contempt. Yesterday he could have enjoyed this luxury of rubbing elbows with the thousands unknown, knowing he, too, was a part of it all, that he had a destination somewhere ahead

under the clustered lights. To-night he had spoiled happiness before he tasted it.

But taste it he would, nevertheless; he found subdued pleasure in the shadowy heights of buildings that rose into upper darkness, unlighted, save for the brilliant flood that bathed their bases; he stared at the round illuminated clocks that stared back at him, mutely exposing dials—for him to study if he wished, for the next who passed, for none, for all—these street beacons set to signal the passing hour, to record dead minutes and seconds dead at birth.

The spine of the dark city, a living nerve-cage, through which light flowed and pulsated in a thousand ganglia, where light was vital as blood to man—that was Broadway.

Letters of fire, sparkling crescents over cafés and theatres, words in letters ten feet long, that flashed up crimson and green, then died to an outline of cinder only to flare out again in advertisement of men and man-wrought merchandise—shop windows festooned with incandescent globules, windows dotted with gas-jets, blank windows bleached in the dead blank glare of white arc-lights hanging outside, fizzling, changing to faintest pink or violet, blackening the pavement with sooty, shifting shadows—light everywhere, overhead where some high window-slit glimmered in vast brick cliffs, under foot where, through man-hole and grating, ground-glass pavement and hidden subway, light struggled up from under the earth itself to be absorbed in the

local Nirvana—heaven or hell, as man had found it. Light in the cable-cars flashing to and fro like jewelled shuttles in a loom of iron, light in the stars, fading as the city's glare dimmed even the high moon, set in the sky like a tinsel crescent; light in heaven, on earth, in the eyes of the living—light, the life blood of the city!

The Café Regent, gilded and frescoed like an inverted bonbonnière, twinkled under mellow showers of light from wall and ceiling. Sconce and candelabra, lamp and chandelier heavy with prisms stained with rainbow tints, sent wave on wave of radiance across the gilt rococo rooms, hot, perfumed, crowded under the still banners of green palms.

He found Weyward and Ivan smoking at a table near the door; a page in black took his hat, cloak, and gloves; he seated himself feeling that it was good to be in bright places again.

Pretty women were everywhere in range; the concord of voices, the ring of glasses, the flash of silver and gilt were pleasant to him. He raised his tiny glass of sherry and sipped, smiling to himself.

There were many there who knew Weyward; Oliver saw men lean forward to catch his eye and bow, women who smiled in friendly coquetry, and who seemed interested, too, in Ivan's handsome face. He himself thought that Ivan and Weyward were certainly a most ornamental accession to the unclassed. Women would have added him to the group; his reserve and youth combined to form a strong attraction.

“Will Miss Wyvern come to the studio?” asked Ivan.

“I don’t know; she has written you,” replied Oliver.

“There’s a strange young girl,” said Weyward lazily, stirring the fern-leaves on the table with his cigarette.

“Why strange?” asked Oliver.

“I think,” replied Weyward, “that I never knew a girl with less chance in life. Her beauty will probably swamp her, but the child has more innate purity of character than you’ll find in some entire congregations.”

“It’s instinct,” said Oliver; “what the world calls temptation only scares her.”

“The cry of ‘Wolf!’ soon becomes familiar,” continued Weyward; “she’ll hear it once too often to be scared.”

“Can’t somebody help her?” asked Ivan, setting down his sherry.

“Help her? To what—a mother?” put in Oliver.

Ivan said; “She has the soul of a grande dame and the impulses of a soubrette.”

“Both are born in most women,” replied Weyward; “their object in life is to cultivate the one and suppress the other.”

“I fancy,” began Oliver, “that her convent breeding has given her that velvety voice of hers,—and her composure. Who she is I don’t know, but I fancy there’s good blood somewhere.”

"Her father," said Weyward, "was Stanley Wyvern, one of the respected doctors of this city; her mother was Canadian. Curious, isn't it,—about Dawson Klaw."

"Why the devil shouldn't he marry Mrs. Wyvern then?" asked Oliver.

"Few men marry unless—they have to," replied Weyward with composure; "what they can hire for a penny they won't buy for a guinea—at least among the unclassed."

It was a cynical remark, the more unpleasant because it did not have the ring of cynicism.

"Do you really believe that?" asked Oliver.

"I really do," said Weyward, smiling at the woodcock on his plate. The woodcock was not unusually ridiculous in its attitude of slumber, but it seemed to amuse Weyward.

"That is to say," continued Oliver, "what men can't hire they marry,—according to you."

"Not exactly; what men *know* they can't hire they are liable to marry. I am not speaking of you or Ivan or—myself," replied Weyward with a weary smile; "we of course are included among the large majority of the socially impossible."

"You mean," said Ivan, "that nobody, for instance, would marry Miss Wyvern if they found it unnecessary."

"Nobody whom she would care to marry is likely to offer her marriage," said Weyward. "That is the danger for her; she could only care for some man like—Oliver, for example."

"Then she'll be safe enough," said Oliver dryly.

Coffee was served before the silence was again broken ; then Ivan said ; "I'm sorry to lose her ; I shall have the figure to repaint."

"She may come back," said Oliver, feeling uneasy at the thought of losing touch in the world with Dulcie.

The scent of violets lay heavy in the heated air ; the wine he drank cooled him a little and he pushed the hot coffee away and motioned the waiter to re-fill his glass.

A moment later Weyward said lazily ; "There's Dulcie Wyvern now."

"Not here?" said Oliver, swinging around in his chair.

She was entering the room, opera cloak thrown back, a great bunch of violets in her white gloved hand.

Behind her came Mazie and *The Pink Rat* ; the Count brought up the rear, quite as symmetrical in his evening dress as any Frenchman can be.

"The nation should revert to the loin-cloth," observed Weyward.

Dulcie saw Weyward and coloured, but her recognition of Ivan was a guilty one and that young man laughed outright. She smiled too, but the smile faded when she met Oliver's eyes, and, with the faintest acknowledgment of a bow, she seated herself.

Ivan turned to Oliver, shrugging his shoulders ; "You see ; she will not pose again."

Weyward's cool voice broke in : " If she's going to the bow-wows with that soiled gentleman in velvet cuffs, we have wasted our sympathy."

Oliver emptied his goblet in silence. The slightest tinge of intoxication mounted to the muscles of his cheeks, bringing a stain of colour.

Passing their table a pretty actress stopped with her escort to offer Weyward a slim hand. They stood chatting and laughing for a moment ; Ivan and Oliver were presented, others joined the group or passed with nods of smiling recognition. Weyward was very popular ; all outsiders knew him.

Leaving the brilliant room Oliver hesitated on the threshold and looked straight across at Dulcie. She bent her head, glanced up once more with troubled eyes, then turned impatiently to the Count.

At the theatre that night Oliver was silent but attentive.

Romayne's comedians were acting an old English comedy with all the beauty of their usual ensemble, and Ida Mohun was the very incarnation of delicate deviltry. The play, seen through the faintest haze of intoxication, was amusing to Ivan and Weyward. Oliver followed it listlessly ; his interest waned with the falling curtain.

" There's another act," said Ivan, who hated to miss anything artistic. So they stayed in the box until the end came.

" Write a play, Oliver," suggested Weyward ; " everybody is doing it now."

"Our janitor wrote one," said Ivan encouragingly.

Oliver laughed and felt better for laughing. Jack Payser hailed them from the crowd around the theatre entrance, offering his club as an oasis in case they needed such an article, but Oliver was inclined to wander and Ivan did not care to sit in a stuffy room and ring for waiters. As for Weyward, he was beginning to feel the after-glow that wine brings to some, when the first cloudiness of the mind has subsided.

"Come on, Jack," said he to Payser; "you know no end of Flossies and Dotties and Totties from the purlieus of stage doors. Let's give a supper to some entire chorus!" But Jack refused modestly, and presently disappeared in a cab headed for John Daly's hospitable though almost inaccessible temple of Hermes.

"Come on," said Ivan; "let's prowl and see things. I'm fond of the city by night."

Weyward surveyed the city from the curbstone, observing that although New York architecture was the highest development of the pastry-cook's art, he required something more stimulating to set him walking the streets for pleasure.

"You, Ivan," he said, "want to mouse about with your eye out for possible models. It's waste time; I can take you to a girl who would be just what you want—only I doubt if she'll pose. However, she's worth seeing. Come on."

"What girl?" inquired Ivan, interested.

"Come and see," replied Weyward, signalling a hansom.

The address he gave the driver was far from Long Acre, and Ivan apparently recognised the vicinity, for he said: "There are handsome women at The Arabesque, but I should scarcely expect to find my types there."

"If there exists a type you won't find there, I'd like to see it," said Weyward. "Are you coming, Oliver? No? Good-night, then!"

Oliver nodded; the vehicle wheeled, swung round a demitour to the gutter; Weyward sprang in after Ivan had preceded him, and the horse moved out into the stony street striking sparks from the pavement.

Oliver boarded a south-bound car.

There were few people in the car: he noticed nobody. Moody, irritable, for the wine had depressed him, he stared at the passing lights, seeing nothing. Three times the car swung around steel curves; he had reached Washington Place before he knew it.

Why he signalled the conductor and got out there instead of waiting until the car reached Fourth Street, he did not himself know until he crossed the dark square. Then he followed the north side of the square instead of the south.

He was curiously prepared to see a single cab standing in front of Dulcie's house. There was a young girl on the sidewalk beside it; a man beside her.

Oliver passed; neither saw him. He heard Magnelius Klaw's voice; he saw the heavy fat hand fall on Dulcie's arm.

He stopped and faced them, and at the same moment the Count emerged from the house, carrying a satchel.

The lamplight illuminated Dulcie's face. It was over-flushed and her eyes seemed heavy and dazed.

When Oliver stepped forward to Dulcie's side, Magnelius Klaw involuntarily stepped back with an agility unexpected in a gentleman of such weight.

"Dulcie," said Oliver.

She laid her hand on his coat with an involuntary sob like one who wakes at midnight, fearing a dream.

The Count came down the steps two at a time, and Oliver took him and fairly hurled him at the cab, which promptly started and, running over him with rubber tires, knocked the last atom of breath out of his body.

Far down the street the cabman was sawing at the reins, cursing furiously; far up the street Mr. Magnelius Klaw was skipping away in ponderous flight. He was an elderly man who abhorred violence. Besides, he had a family. Notoriety has no business with married men.

CHAPTER XVI.

DAWN.

*Wherein is shown that he who would live without folly
is not as wise as he thinks.*

DAWN marbled the sky above the tree tops in Washington Square, but the room was yet in twilight and the gas still flickered over the bed where Dulcie lay.

She was not asleep; her cheeks were hot and flushed, her eyes unnaturally bright. There was the faintest odour of wine in the room. The snowy pallour of her throat and hands contrasted strangely with her burning, scarlet mouth.

Oliver sat by the window, frowning out at the eastern sky already inlaid with pink and pearl and faintest primrose where a single tiny cloud of amethyst, fringed with fire, foreshadowed the hidden sun.

Meeting her eyes again in the room's waning twilight he watched her silently, and the lines in his face deepened. Care was with him again—his old companion, Black Care, the squire alike of horsemen and those who ride the unshod mare to the last ditch of life.

That fate should add another burden to the pack he staggered under neither surprised nor embittered him, now that he recognised the burden was his.

It was a question, merely, whether or not he might come to his knees when he assumed it.

Heretofore he had proceeded on the conviction that Dulcie and her future concerned anybody but himself. Unsought, she and her future had come to him, returning persistently when he considered himself the least responsible.

He was not a fatalist, neither was he a narrow man. When the impossibility of his assuming control of Dulcie became a possibility, a thousand little material and practical reasons arose to warn him that he should not do so. With the *fait accompli* these had vanished as though they had never existed. So here she was, in his room, lying there on his bed, quite alone in the world save for the sober-eyed vagabond in evening dress, brooding by the grey window,—save for the little dog, curled upon the rug at the bedside, nose on flank, brown eyes always watching.

His master turned his grave face to the window. Morning had blossomed like a fresh rose in the east. The sun was still hidden; the little purple cloud had dissolved to a drop of liquid flame. One by one long, living tentacles of light shot up, feeling for the last shadows in the zenith. In the pulsating silence of dawn a sparrow began to chirp sweetly.

When he thought that he had solved another problem in facts and emotions, he left the chair by the window and went to the bedside. The little dog made room for him.

"Dulcie," he said, "let's start again—together. We've been groping about a bit but we always meet in some new circle."

He hesitated to read her eyes. They were fathomless yet clear as a child's now.

"I have no one," he said; "I shall be very glad of the responsibility. We are a lonely lot—we outsiders. If anybody would only classify us—if we could only classify ourselves and seek out our kin and kind?—but we're a lonely lot, even among the unclassified."

The glowing east sent a rosy glimmer into the room. On the wall above the bed a pale tracery spread its pattern of sunbeams.

He went on: "It is only a matter of time when things will begin to move for me. When one begins with nothing it goes hard for a while; that's the reason I have kept away from people and from—you. A man, unfortunately, must begin by feeding himself if he expects to live to feed others."

The ghastly gaslight flickered up in a draught of fresh air; he turned it out. For a while he watched the network of sunshine dancing on the wall; a single spot of light fell on her hair. Then he spoke again:

"I did not understand that you needed a friend—or that I needed one—in you. It seemed a cruel

parody on friendship for me, a passerby, to stop you and preach that virtue is its own reward. I have suffered from that kind of hypocrisy too much to inflict it. I had nothing to offer when I first knew you ; later I had nothing but a little money to offer. I offer my friendship now, Dulcie."

She laid one feverish hand on his.

"For little customs of little men I think I care little," he said. "I am not a substitute for kith and kin ; there is none. I only am here whenever you want me."

The netted pattern on the wall had spread over her like a veil of light. She closed her eyes ; her fingers closed, holding his.

"As far as I can see, the world has been well swept for us, Dulcie," he said.

That brought a train of thought, and, thinking, he spoke aloud :

"My father was in the Confederate army—we were Virginians. He entered the Khedive's service after the surrender ; my mother died when I was born—in Cairo. I was a nuisance, I fancy ; my father's sister took me to New York, where I lived until I was ten. Then she died, and I was sent with a servant to Cairo, then shipped to Paris. I went to the Lycée Louis le Grand ; after to the Sorbonne, then to Cairo. My father, Colonel Lock, died quite insolvent. I had enough to come to America and I came—home."

Home ? The word would have been a mockery in the mouth of any but an Anglo-Saxon. But it is

that word that has made the great Anglo-Saxon compact inevitable, belting the globe with homes—homes to fight for as long as the English race shall endure on earth.

“There is,” said Oliver, “no reason to be frightened at anything in the world ; my father told me that, once when I telegraphed him, fearing he had been with Hicks Pasha when Arabi broke loose along the coast.”

Dulcie opened her grey eyes and looked up into his face.

“Nothing can really harm the soul, either,” he said gravely,—“not even ourselves. That was never told me.”

“I believe it,” said Dulcie, peacefully.

The difference between facts and emotions was a constant source of speculation to the little dog, Grippe. The fact was that he had been forbidden to jump upon the bed ; his emotions urged him to do it. So, with something between a howl of dismay at his own temerity and a yelp of affection for the company present he landed on Dulcie and immediately rolled over, urging forgiveness with one paw.

Oliver prepared to discipline Grippe, but Dulcie, at first frightened into a sitting posture, took the small dog into her arms and caressed him. He belonged to Oliver ; she held him so close that he wriggled, unable to endure the joy within him.

“There is a room,” said Oliver, “next to mine. The lock is in order ; it is yours. As for your pos-

sessions, I'll have them here by noon. It's the safest solution for the moment ; however, I don't believe we will find it pleasant for long, and I'll know the proper course to take in a few days. Meanwhile, my room is yours."

She thanked him quite simply. The fever of the wine had left her tired but composed. She watched him moving about the room to find his morning clothes ; he was light-hearted enough to hum a tune under his breath.

"That reminds me," he said, turning sharply ; "You have a first-rate voice."

She coloured and laughed a little.

"Study is what you care for— isn't it ?"

"Yes," she said faintly.

He found his garments at last and started for the door, saying that he would return by noon and that she must sleep until then. As he passed the bed she held out her hand.

"Before I sleep," she said, "may I tell you about last night ? I shall not sleep if I do not."

He sat down on the bed's edge again, and she told him all :

"I fancied you cared nothing—I could not find anybody to tell me things. They came—we saw you at the Regent. After that we went to the play ; Mr. Klaw was there. Then Mazie went home and the others took me to supper—I don't know where—and the Frenchman told me I must go somewhere and do something—but it was very confused and I had a great deal of champagne—I wanted it—think-

ing of your face as you left the Regent. After that they drove me back to the house—and then they wanted me to get into the cab again. I knew I must not—I scarcely heard what they said. Then—you came. That is all—truly it is—Oliver.”

CHAPTER XVII.

OLIVER ERRANT.

In which it is pointed out that no man is clever enough to know how stupid he can be.

GRIPPE finished his bowl of bread and milk on the hearth, licked his ragged whiskers, yawned amiably, and walked over to the chair by the window. From this chair he could see other dogs in the square below ; when he tired of observing them he could bristle at passing sparrows. When this pleasure cloyed, there was Dulcie to watch over, and he could pretend that she was in mysterious peril, making it necessary for him to sleep with one eye open, and growl at intervals when people creaked up and down stairs outside the landing.

Truly the duties and responsibilities of small dogs are complex and onerous ; twenty-four hours are none too long for their proper discharge.

Dulcie dreamed.

The lattice work of sunbeams paled and flickered on the wall ; the flies darted in and out of the sun, resting to rub their fore-legs or polish their wings with crossed hind feet,—proceedings silently resented by the little dog.

Sparrows, too, were plenty and impudently familiar, and it needed much self effacement to swallow a bark of defiance and change it into a gurgle.

Toward noon Oliver left the office of *Zig-Zag* with eighty dollars in his pocket and a copy of the paper in his hand. It was a sheet devoted to bright colours, dull epigrams, and women's ankles,—an exotic importation modelled on Continental journals, lacking their wit, draughtsmanship, taste, and depravity. Its success was assured.

To make it witty Eugene Smith was ready to pay; accident had thrown "The Winged Boy" into his large, smooth hands; he read it in a cable-car, and forgot the author's name when he mislaid the book. Therefore, when Weyward looked him up one day on Oliver's behalf, the matter was easily arranged.

"Spice your copy, Mr. Lock," said Eugene Smith, accompanying Oliver to the elevator; "I don't want this knock-about, gag-me-and-I-gag-you business. Let us have three columns that makes your breath whistle through your teeth. The public are dead sore on toughs and goats and niggers and sheenies."

"I have," laughed Oliver, "plenty to say that won't interest the East Side."

"That's right," said Mr. Smith, his big, baby face creased into a smile. "Tights are out of date; hoist the petticoat but keep it between the ankle and the knee!"

Oliver stopped short.

"About ankles," he said dryly, "I find shoes and stockings—nothing more, Mr. Smith."

In Mr. Smith's total journalistic experience he had never before been snubbed. The sensation was so novel that he almost liked it. He pouted and blinked at Oliver through his glasses, considering this young stranger whose independence was a curiosity in the profession.

"I suppose you'll give us what we want?" he said bluntly.

"Certainly, if you want what I give you," replied Oliver.

Smith laughed; Oliver would make people read anyway.

"Young man," he said, "can't you do as the Romans do in this town without loss of self respect?"

"I'll do what they do—if they'll let me tell them what to do," said Oliver guardedly.

So Eugene Smith retired to his sanctum to charge a skirt-dancer a hundred dollars for publishing her portrait in *Zig-Zag*, and Oliver walked back to Washington Square, doubtful of the permanency of his present position.

In that case what would become of Dulcie?

Sunshine and daylight are filters for gas-light philosophy; he began to realise what he had undertaken as he entered the square where a young girl, wholly dependent on him, lay asleep under his own roof.

Now some men commit folly from choice; fate

compels many to folly; the remainder are predestined to be fools, anyhow, which should partly console all.

But Oliver, crossing the square and looking up at the windows of his room, found no consolation in predestination or the doctrine of original imbecility.

The little dog saw him from the window, and began to patter and dance and whistle sentimentally until Dulcie stirred in her slumbers and awoke to find Oliver standing by her bed and Grippe trying to stand on his own head.

When a man is troubled, his instinct is to say so. This inherent honesty of the sex may be its own reward; usually it is a bore to everybody except women.

Dulcie saw trouble in his eye and smiled at the prospect of consolation. Her smile was delightful and defeated its own ends; for Oliver forgot his misgivings when he took her unresisting hand in both of his.

"Everything is all right," he said with cheerful perversity. "Your trunk and boxes are in the next room,—see, here is the key, Dulcie. For the present we shall breakfast and dine together, here; I have given orders at Spinkle's. And now you can help Ivan with his picture and retire to your fortress when you care to and nobody will be the wiser except the janitor, whose fangs I drew with a tip and whom I can guarantee to be as harmless as he is venal."

"It can not last, can it, Oliver?" she said with a sigh of content.

"You mean we can't stay here without scandal? I fancy not. However, there's time."

He certainly needed time to adjust himself to the new conditions. Dulcie's twenty dollars a week from her sitting for Ivan would help her; his own eighty dollars every Saturday made sailing easy—if the eighty dollars continued to come in. That was the danger; Eugene Smith was the shiftiest and most uncertain of editors and promoters.

While Dulcie was arranging her disordered hair and gown preparatory to seeking her own room for ablutions and fresh garments, Oliver strolled into Ivan's studio.

He found that young man sitting on top of a high revolving chair, smoking and laughing and whirling around idly, while, on the model stand, a delicately draped figure sat, sandaled toes drawn up under her robe, bare arms crossed over her knees.

After a moment's silence, during which Oliver decided that an apology for intrusion was bad taste, Ivan, handsome face flushed, presented him to his new model.

She was winsome and grave, with all the seriousness of inexperience in a false position. However, Oliver's indifference and Ivan's ready ease dissipated restraint.

"I see you have painted out your figure and are

already on a new ebauche?" said Oliver, dismayed at the prospect of Dulcie being replaced.

"And I am very contented with my model," said Ivan, laughing. "Would you mind standing a moment, Tessie?"

She stood up, unconsciously taking the pose; the straight folds fell around her, the sandals glittered.

Oliver said nothing, for Ivan, standing on his chair before the big suspended canvas, had already begun to work. The stillness in the studio seemed to hypnotise Tessie. The smile faded, the curve of her lips relaxed into a touching solemnity, but her brown eyes never left Ivan.

Leaving the studio quietly, Oliver met Jack Payser on the landing, who said: "Oh, my innocent friend, have you seen Ivan's new model? She is a corker!"

"I've seen her," said Oliver smiling.

"I know her," continued Jack; "she was one of Armand's hat models until last week. I didn't know she was posing. Tessie Delmour is a corker and no mistake!"

Oliver said nothing and Jack rattled on:

"The Count had a fight last night; somebody gave him a most terrific thrashing and he's in bed squalling with pain and rage and keeping the whole second floor in a dreadful state. Did you ever hear a Frenchman weep? Come down—don't miss it, I beg of you. That little Tombs attorney is with him—what's his name—oh, Dyke Van Shuyster."

"Is he seriously injured?" asked Oliver.

"No; both peepers closed, brisket damaged, pasterns scratched and nigh foot sprained above the hock. He says he means to murder people, not specifying. By the way, where did you go after the theatre?"

"Home," said Oliver, considering it the proper reply at the time. He suddenly decided not to tell Payser or anybody else that Dulcie was in the Monastery. Before they found out he hoped he might be ready to place her in more suitable quarters. But the velocity of scandal rivals the speed popularly credited to prayer, and when Jack Payser clattered on down stairs he met *The Pink Rat* with his mouth full of venom, coming up to visit Monsieur the Count.

"Your friend, young Lock, seems to have struck it rich," said the Rat as Payser returned his nod.

"How do you mean?" asked Jack, stopping.

"He's struck pay dirt somewhere," said the Rat spitefully: "I suppose he'll keep a caniche next."

"What's he keeping now?" demanded Jack, suspicious of Mr. Jaune.

Jaune said something in French, maliciously, adding: "A caniche comes next, you know."

"You're losing your intellect," said Jack, contemptuously; "only Jews keep such articles in New York."

"Such articles sometimes keep Christians, though," sneered Jaune, starting on. He was too slow; little Mr. Payser promptly struck him on his right eye

with a sound like the crack of a lash ; and they clinched and rolled down two flights of stairs to the scandal of Ramon Quesada, Vice Consul for Yucatan.

Jaune, being nervous, fairly screamed with the pain in his eye, while little Jack Payser regarded him in silence, breathing hard.

The Vice Consul for Yucatan counselled moderation for the present and pistols for the next morning, and Jack went out of the house laughing, perhaps a trifle ashamed, but carrying his honours with native jauntiness and affability.

"How that Pink Rat did squeal," he murmured ; "I wonder whether Oliver has been as foolish as the rest of us ?"

Down town Jack Payser met Weyward at luncheon and told him what he had done to *The Pink Rat*.

"Good boy," said Weyward, "the Rat deserves it. But Oliver may have his affairs like the rest of us. He's not a god, you know."

"In justification of myself I may observe that the gods themselves had a hot time on Olympus, didn't they ?" asked Jack. "By the way, don't you believe a man may make pies out of pitch—and not be defiled ? I do."

"You won't when you're older," said Weyward encouragingly, a remark ignored by Mr. Payser in the depths of a mug of ale.

However, that night when the cares and duties of a real-estate broker permitted Mr. Payser to return to the more congenial relaxations of the Monas-

tery, little Theodore Veeder, the artist who painted in the air with his thumb, informed a table full of men at Spinkle's that Oliver Lock had acquired an unlimited interest in Dulcie Wyvern and that the tender episode recalled a similar situation in which he, Veeder, had figured in the Latin Quarter.

"Throw a plate at the little monster!" exclaimed Jack in horror; "we're a decent crowd here!" And that quashed further discussion of Oliver Lock and his affairs for the moment.

But Jack was interested; he withdrew from the company at an early hour and paid a visit to Oliver. And Mr. Payser nearly fainted when, on entering the room, he beheld Oliver and Dulcie calmly discussing corned beef and salad.

He had seen many households such as he supposed this to be, but he was not yet satisfied with his conclusions; and so, fortunately for himself as well as for the others, he refrained from taking the traditional attitude of jaunty and mysterious benevolence,—that horrible parody on an old friend's privileged wit at the expense of married bliss.

Oliver cared to make no explanations in Dulcie's presence; later he decided to make none at all, not caring to humble either her or himself by justification, an attitude that presupposes the existence or admits the possibility of evil.

Puzzled and polite, Jack Payser took his leave without being a whit the wiser. He met Ivan in the hallway, carrying a pitcher of shandy-gaff to his studio.

"My heaven, but you must have a thirst!" he observed, sniffing fondly at the huge loving cup.

"I have," said Ivan calmly; "what's the matter with your eye?"

"Jaune did it. Am I to have any of that shandy-gaff?"

"It's enough for three," said Ivan; "come on."

"Three?" said Payser, much pleased.

"Yes, three," said a voice from the studio door, where Tessie Delmour stood, bare arms covered with blue clay; "Come into the studio, Jack Payser, and see Ivan give me my first lesson in modelling!"

Ivan turned sharply and said under his breath; "Where did you know her, Jack?"

"In Armand's," replied Jack serenely; "Sylvia Tring of the Athenian bought her hats there, didn't she, Tessie?"

"I'm afraid to say who paid for them, too," replied Tessie, at which Mr. Payser turned an exquisite pink colour and pretended he didn't hear.

Late that night when Jack Payser had sought his modest little pillow and lay there coquetting with the drowsy goddess, it occurred to him that the Monastery, if not already a convent, was distinctly co-educational and progressive in its tendencies.

"It won't do for an anchorite like me," he said plaintively, as a burst of laughter echoed along the hallway outside his door. Presently somebody knocked and called through the key-hole; "Wake up, Jack! Mazie and Sylvia and some of those

Athenian girls are going to have supper in Trivol's studio !”

Jack arose and patiently lighted the gas.

“This cloister is no place for a recluse like me,” he muttered.

But he dressed again and went out, extinguishing his gas as though he might remain absent for some time.

“What puzzles me,” he grumbled, stumbling up the dark stairs, “is this Oliver Errant and his Dulcinea.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

WEYWARD'S LETTER.

Containing a most singular perversion of facts and fancies.

WEYWARD had been in the country, somewhere, nearly three weeks before Oliver received a singular and characteristic letter from him dated Sioux City, October 21 :

MY DEAR FELLOW,

Apropos of your new book which you write me Mawly has asked for—don't let it go! October brings a quiver of reviving activity through the literary world; your chance will come; the magazines prepare holiday pabulum for the public, the newspapers grow cheaper, meaner, noisier and gaudier, the publishers begin to advertise themselves at the expense of their authors. Puff, puff, quack, quack, what d'ye lack! is the song, swelling to a slogan; the big drum booms; the spirit of Barnum rides the October wind. For the literary world is a nasty little ginger-bread fair, hung with painted scenery through which author-marionettes dangle and posture and jerk their wooden limbs. It never was anything else, it never will be, this shop full of strutting toys, revolving, bowing, smirking, while publisher after publisher takes his turn at the strings and buys or prices the newest and stickiest.

There exist but two noble arts, Oliver, sculpture

and design, though there are noble artists,—like yourself,—in the lesser art of letters. The artist is solitary, the artisan gregarious; the artist lives outside of his so-called world of art, the artisan huddles within its limits, lives in it, reeks of it, babbles of his world and his fellow artists. There is nothing sillier or more ignoble than the so-called literary world and its fauna, nothing more insincere, nothing more artificial. It is a rabbit-warren, promiscuous and full of underground squeaks and intrigues, a catacomb for the unclassified, where fatuous uncle-foozles wag their ears with the solemnity of Kings in Bedlam, and young unidentified literati dance mad contra-dances with their own shadows.

No artist with a rag of respect for himself or for his ambition can find aid or inspiration by living in any technical or special "world"; no man with a healthy sense of the absurd can settle among its denizens, blinking owl-like out at the wholesome world where inspiration alone has its source. Oliver, keep out of the literary world, but investigate it through a microscope.

The atmosphere of the sweat-shops of art is not a tonic; little fry vitiate it, big fry exhaust it. Rubbing elbows with a tailor may inspire another tailor; the artist is never inspired by men, but by their work, and the work goes out into the fresh, breezy, everyday world—back to the source of its inspiration. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, rain to the sea, and good to the good from whence it came!

A day in the "literary world" would be sufficient to show you what a life-time there could be.

A day in the literary world is a warning and a moral to the unfledged, oh, Oliver, my son!

Nobody but the healthy worker can know how good it is to escape the dull makers of talk who

reign among the consecrated in their "world," dandling straws for sceptres—no one but he who has met the inhabitants of that world in the flesh—the lank, sloppy, English brother with his futile essays and foolish whiskers, smelling and sniffing the footsteps of the great; the feeble professor of literature and flaccid phrase, the publisher's panders, paid for, soul and body, and wearing the wolf-skin of the critic over the bleating body of a sheep. The world of letters? A retreat for the unclassed, Oliver,—a tainted serum where the cultured hermaphrodite can reproduce himself like that singular segmented individual so intimately and painfully allied with many vertebrates. Women huddle into the literary world, women with three names, who write, write, write! The periodicals of the country are choked with undigested women wearing three names, the book-stalls groan with their harvests, the literary world reeks of their tea, and its siroccos hiss through their docked hair.

More weak, more contemptible than that other solemn Bedlam, the "theatrical world," the squawking "literary world" wobbles on down the vistas of imbecility, while the eternal questions are eternally interpreted and solved by the simpler children of a simpler world whose creed is silence and sincerity. Hold aloof, oh, my son!

And when your work is done, and the last phrase rewritten—shrink from the manuscript and shun it, letting it depart in peace.

The gentle art of letters ceases with the click of the type-writer; the horrified muse picks up her skirt and runs, yielding her frontier to a grotesque Grimaldo who enters beating a gong, hollowed hand to cheek, shouting his crowd around him. Attend! good people, for the Greatest Show on Earth is free to all—the launching of a modern

book!—by Tom, by Dick, by Harry,—all great! geniuses all, my honest oafs,—but the greatest of all is their Publisher!!!

The season is beginning; your time is coming with it. People will read your books, you will be sought after, more and more; literary societies will invite you, maidens in mousseline de soie will prattle praise to you,—the whole ginger-bread fair will open to you, free of charge. Enter, my friend, and examine the show, but don't hire a tent and set up housekeeping with those on exhibition in the side-shows.

There are few men competent to criticise who give their time to that lower form of letters. Be thankful if they honour you by their notice.

As for the critics, labelled and odoriferous of their profession, remember they would not write criticisms if they could write books.

Stupidity is more than a visitation of God, it is a science. Mediocrity is a bacillus whose culture begins and ends in over-culture. Intellectual ladies of both sexes are its prey, and the ravage of the microbe renders them unfit for anything except the chair of belles-lettres in some university or the career of a professional critic.

Do not look for justice: you will never get it; you may get more than justice and less than justice but you will not receive justice.

Write like the devil! Remember a shoe-maker must stick to his last—but don't you do it! Amuse yourself as you wish to, until you are ready to write again.

To show, to give to the world, to place before men, is the impulse of youth that has wrought sincerely.

The harvest is disillusion, my friend, the reward for sincerity is the plaudits or sneers of the medi-

ocre, the bleating of the fat-witted, the vacant stare of the self-satisfied, the squeal of the parasite and sycophant.

“He that careth not to please men nor feareth to displease them shall enjoy much peace.”

So age, the saddest blessing, brings indifference, our saddest mercy.

But we must become very, very old before we understand or believe it——

Must we not, Oliver, my friend?

All this has been said before—all this has been repeated by better men than I.

But Truth was created for repetition, which was not the object when Providence designed.

Your friend,

WEYWARD.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE LAW.

In which Oliver observes the irregularities of the law but little of its majesty.

As Oliver entered his room, Dulcie stood at the door taking leave of Ivan's brown-eyed model, Tessie Delmour. The latter had been crying; she nodded to Oliver without looking at him and hurried back across the hallway to Ivan's studio.

"I asked you not to visit Tessie," said Oliver, following Dulcie into the room, and discouraging Grippe's assault of welcome.

"I did not visit her, Oliver."

"It's the same; she comes here," he said irritably.

"She is very unhappy; I cannot refuse her."

"Where did you know her?" he asked after a moment's indecision.

"At Armand's; I took her place, and she felt that it was unfair. Oh, that miserable Milliner!—I—I can't tell you all he did, Oliver,—only that he offered me Tessie's place—and—I went home—without my hat. After that the Jewess forewoman kept up her cruel treatment and——"

"And—what?"

"Tessie was insane—I think," she answered innocently.

"Did she tell you what she did?" he insisted sharply.

"Yes; oh, Oliver, how *could* she? It was her mind that was sick—she was not a bad girl—she didn't know. Oliver, don't be cruel to her."

"Why couldn't Ivan let her alone?" he said morosely. "He's as weak as the rest of them—those ascetic apostles of Lippo," he muttered to himself; "they're an angelic band, the whole crowd of them."

"Are you angry at Tessie?" she asked, prepared to believe that whatever he thought must be just.

"I? No!" he replied, with a bitter laugh she could not understand.

He recalled one evening in June—he had been in the city only a week—when he stepped into a great church to hear an exhorter deliver verbal kicks at a scared and anxious congregation. The reverend gentleman had them where he wanted them and he kicked them headlong into grace before they could escape. But, as the startled flock tumbled pell mell toward salvation, the exhorter bawled after them;

"By the sin of woman all men were damned! Let us humbly forgive our first mother, whose heritage was Eden and whose legacy was hell!"

And another day, walking in Union Square with Weyward, Oliver said; "There is no such thing as temptation; there are no devils, only deviltries;" and Weyward replied;

"No devils? There are legions born every hour,

legions that die every hour, legions alive, walking the earth. A personal devil? Millions, my dear fellow; go to the window."

He meant woman; Oliver wondered at his bitterness,—a bitterness that distorted the saddest of all truths.

"I don't know, Dulcie," he said; "I don't know what to say. I can't help wishing she'd let you alone."

He certainly did not know what to say. It was already the end of October, and since September Tessie had made Ivan's home her home. The girl was infatuated; she clung to Ivan with a sort of desperate terror, trying to kill memory, but she could not live in the present, and she could hope for nothing in the future,—and her agony drove her to Dulcie.

What Ivan chose to do Oliver felt concerned nobody but Ivan. He was sorry for his friend's weakness, he was certain that the young fellow's talent would go out in this fiercer flame. It did not; it flared at that moment with a brilliancy startling, and the ebauche was already a picture, perfect in technical detail, glowing with a promise that stifled the calculations of criticism.

As for Tessie, if Ivan was her idol, the picture was her shrine,—nay, it was part of her; and, sometimes at midnight, she would wake and creep into the studio to sit before the canvas, content to be near the unseen easel in the darkness.

Once Ivan found her asleep in a chair before it,

and it frightened him strangely. That day he did no work, but rambled off into the country with Tessie, seeking perhaps for the peace that had left him when his eyes first met hers in the "scarlet room" of "The Arabesque."

Oliver had nothing to say, no advice to give. He wished Tessie would not worry Dulcie to death, but he said nothing more on the subject to Dulcie. Besides, his own affairs were not exactly to his liking.

Mr. Mawly filled the halls with perfume at intervals, but Oliver did not care to give him the manuscript of "The Self-Satisfied."

Finally one day Mr. Mawly arrived to announce the certain financial failure of "The Winged Boy" unless Oliver followed this first *ballon d'essai* with a new book.

Oliver listened in silence to Mr. Mawly's plausible plans for a future. Mr. Mawly was persuasive and pathetic by turns; he viewed with alarm the disaster to Oliver's hopes; being a philanthropist by nature and profession he made light of his own losses, but the spectacle of Oliver perishing in the vat of letters for lack of a life-belt to keep him afloat tore Mr. Mawly with an anguish that only such a publisher can feel.

"The public will not buy your book," he said; "what can I do, Mr. Lock?"

"Advertise," suggested Oliver.

"What man can do," said Mr. Mawly with emotion, "I have done."

“Well,” said Oliver wearily; “if you assure me that your publishing “The Self-Satisfied” may save both books, I will give it to you,—on that understanding.”

“The same terms?” asked Mr. Mawly, rubbing the solitaire on his finger. “I can not risk an advance.” His polished green eyes were fixed on space; he silently exhaled perfume from every pore, like an innocuous Upas tree.

So the thing was settled, and Oliver threw his second book after the first, hopefully,—for there was much of the gambler in him, when the hazard concerned only himself.

He stood looking after Mawly as that embodied Vale of Cashmere descended the stairway with the manuscript of “The Self-Satisfied,” promising cheerfully to draw up an agreement in writing as Oliver insisted he should do.

“I don’t know why,” thought Oliver, watching the shiny silk hat sinking into the pit of the stairway,—“I don’t know why the whipper-in should be afraid of the fox.”

He returned to his room singing cheerfully:

“The Master of Harriers wears a green coat,
The Master of Hounds a pink ’un—
The Devil he cares not a damn what he wears
When he’s hunting the Bishop of Lincoln!”

Fortune had been casting sheep’s-eyes at Oliver lately; for some occult reason Eugene Smith had continued his eighty dollars a week. Beside that,

as his articles in *Zig-Zag* were signed, he found it possible to dispose of one or two very short stories at very low rates, to other papers.

Comments on his "Winged Boy" appeared now and then in the so-called "critical" department peculiar to moribund journals, and sure to increase in virulence as the journal approaches dissolution.

"The Winged Boy" occasioned some excitement among a group of the youngest reporters on the *Daily Spy*, and that prejudiced good old Mrs. Bottom against book and author.

She knew how to spell literature backward, bless her heart, and her duties as the *Spy's* critic included the firm suppression of enthusiasm among young journalists from Park Row to Herald Square.

So she rebuked book and author with the artless indignation of a disturbed tabby-cat, and settled down again to literature, keeping a malevolent eye on the scared reporters.

Meanwhile, Oliver had begun "The Iron City" at last, and he started it, writing by the window in the morning sunshine, while Dulcie in the next room sat silent over her mending, and the little dog, nose against the panes, stared out at the sparrows chirping in every naked tree-top.

The theme of steel was always partly a dirge to him.

But there was, too, something of triumph in the iron concord, something at least hopeful in the heaviest sorrow that the murmur of the city brought, even at midnight.

The theme sobered him always; immensity depresses; all that dominates, temporal and spiritual, saddens in the end.

That night he finished his work, tired to death with the strain and pitiless tension of his theme. "The Iron City" seemed to weigh his shoulders to his knees.

Dulcie, in her room, had lighted the lamp, and now she looked up from her book,—a tattered skeleton of a book she had bought that morning in a second hand store on Broadway.

"To think," said Oliver, "that these critics should strike men who are hitched to a book and racked on it as they used to break people on wheels!"

"Listen to *this* book," said Dulcie mischievously;

"'Men exist for the sake of one another. Teach them then or bear with them.'"

"That's not logic either," said Oliver, wondering where he had heard the lines before.

"No?" said Dulcie, delighted; "listen, Oliver:

"'If thou findest in human life anything better than justice, truth, temperance, fortitude, turn to it with all thy soul.'"

"Oh," said Oliver, "I know now; have you never before read the Imperial paradox?"

"Never," said Dulcie, and her face flushed with her enthusiasm.

Biting into the pie-crust of literature and encountering Antoninus had excited the girl. She lay back in her chair, crossing one leg over the other, and, from a dozen dog-eared pages, she read to Oliver

what she had marked. She had marked what she found lovable and noble at first reading, taking a deeper pleasure in setting it aside to enjoy again with Oliver. Her eager upward glance at intervals, her hair in gleaming disorder, her pauses to see what he might think, doubtful at times of his sympathy—all this touched and amused him.

He watched her fingers smoothing the tattered leaves with delicate devotion, a devotion he himself had never felt for books. But the love of books was in her, he could not fail to see that in her timid deference to every ragged page.

That the love of worthy things had long ago budded in her child's breast he could not doubt; that it had not perished in the arid routine or hurt bewilderment of her life since she had left the convent was equally certain. Just what appreciation and culture she was capable of, he could not guess.

She had been taking her lessons now ever since Oliver's contract with *Zig-Zag* brought him his eighty dollars a week. Oliver went to Signor Ditti's with her, and called for her, a precaution that had its effect on that simian Italian and on the flotsam and jetsam from the fringe of society that made the Signor's "Conservatory" a rendezvous for the unclassed.

Now, watching the changing expressions grow and fade in her face as she sat reading her first love, Antoninus, he felt a new courage, a new faith in her future. For surely this instinct for the best in

the world meant more than a mere guarantee of physical virtue.

She stopped reading suddenly.

"Do you know how happy I am?" she said, as though the confession amazed her own ears.

"Are you?" he laughed, watching the colour in her cheeks.

"I can scarcely realise it myself—I don't know why I am so perfectly happy either, but, to-night, I feel a curious expectancy, a thrill in my throat that excites me—like the pleasure and suspense you feel in the first notes of a song. Oh, do you understand me, Oliver?"

He said he did.

"How deliciously exciting life is! I had no idea—I thought life was what I saw when Mazie and Sylvia and I had such good times—but it was childish and silly—I didn't know what pleasure could be."

"And—what is pleasure?" he asked, smiling.

"Why—this!"

They turned and looked around at the shabby walls. Could she find happiness in this grotesque parody on home,—in this impossible situation where the first false move on either side meant mischief?

"You mean—you are contented?" he asked.

"No, oh no—but contentment is not happiness—is it?"

"Indeed it is not," said Oliver, laughing at her philosophy.

She observed his amusement shyly, her delicate chin resting on the edge of the closed book. But his amusement seldom hurt her, partly because she had no trace of suspicion in her nature, partly because she believed implicitly in Oliver's view of things. When she spoke it was not with the diffidence that dreads a dissenting opinion, but with the desire to have her own words and belief remoulded by this new confidant of hers.

She curled up on the sofa, book under her chin, intrenching herself against his persuasions to a dinner at Martin's; and, at length, he gave up and sat down to wait for the coming of Spinkle's blond assistant with the usual dinner of boiled meat and vegetables.

"It is curious," she said dreamily, "how little you ever question me."

He looked up quickly, saying that he should never think of demanding any confidence from her that she did not offer.

"But I don't like that," she said almost pettishly; "I do want you to ask me things. There is no one else to care what I do."

"I do care," he said.

"Then, if you do, find fault sometimes."

She lay there, watching the amused expressions pass across his face, wondering herself what it was she wanted. It may have been praise, for he seldom praised her.

"I sang to suit Signor Ditti to-day," she said.

"Was he pleased?"

“Yes. Are you?”

He could not mistake the wistful eyes; he went over and sat down on the lounge beside her, taking her idle hands in his.

“I am very, very proud of you, Dulcie,” he said; “your success is the greatest pleasure I could have, little comrade.”

He said it to please her, but, even before he finished, he realised it was the truth he was speaking.

He had never before spoken to her like that; it thrilled her deliciously to feel the warmth in his voice—the voice she obeyed so unquestioningly, the voice she, until that moment, had only found kindly, indifferent and impersonally pleasant.

As he sat there, looking down at her, something of tenderness touched him—nay, more—an alarm for her helplessness, her inexperience, her utter dependence on the decency of the world.

He, sitting there beside her, could, through affection, make her what he wished,—shape her to his will, mould her delicate soul, incline her desires to meet his own.

He realised all that, facing the question impersonally, but acknowledging that the woman beside him was ripe for the influence of man—any man in whom her inexperience found the needed support and sympathy. A straw in the balance would shape her course; a straw in the wind—and she would follow straw and wind.

He knew enough of women to know how easy it

is to arouse love in a woman who has nothing but love to return for kindness.

"Are you asleep, Dulcie?" he asked.

"Yes," she said with a comfortable little sigh. She opened her grey eyes, then drew his hands over her eyes, holding them there.

She did not release his hands; he bent lower; their fingers interlocked; his face rested on their tightening hands.

Then, their hands fell away, and it was her face that his face touched—rested on, lip against lip.

He sat up, amazed at his imbecility; she lay there as if stunned, pale, breathless, covering her eyes with both white hands.

He attempted to realise what they had done. Self contempt and humiliation staggered him, drove him into his own room, where he stood staring at space.

CHAPTER XX.

DULCIE'S LOGIC.

A chapter including very little but foolishness.

THE days that followed were strangely expectant yet exciting and happy to Dulcie. Warm hearted, inexperienced and impulsive, she saw no reason to change her attitude toward Oliver for the fault of a kiss on the lips. The kiss had surprised her as it had surprised him, but she never thought of resentment.

To feel herself on her guard with him she found secretly delightful and exciting,—for she was quite certain that he must not kiss her another time—at least so easily. No, she would not permit him to touch her again; the sensation ended by alarming her, and it made her ashamed, too, though she did not know exactly why.

She had grown beautiful within a week; her colour was exquisite, her eyes brilliant and soft by turns. That the girl cared more for Oliver than she had ever cared for anybody he could see plainly enough; that, in her affectionate confidence in him she felt herself safe in her shy attitude of provocation and denial, was also plain to him. Her fate lay entirely in his hands.

As for him, he was determined neither to care for her seriously, nor to let her care for him. He was interested and affectionate, he was full of sympathy for her, but he carefully avoided anything to be construed into tender or hidden significance, anything that might intimate the possibility of a deeper understanding between them. Perhaps he was too careful, for sometimes Dulcie found herself not quite content with him.

Then, one day toward the end of the week, when Oliver was out, Magnelius and Dawson Klaw appeared unannounced.

Exactly what occurred Oliver could not at first make out from Dulcie's frightened and disconnected account. However, it was certain that Dawson had threatened trouble for her and for Oliver unless she returned to her mother, and Magnelius Klaw had promised to stay away from the house if Dulcie would return and submit to Mrs. Wyvern's authority.

Oliver found her in tears with both doors locked and Grippe placed at the sill as sentinel. She was quite unnerved and disheartened, saying between her sobs that she had forgotten all her former unhappiness, that they had been cruel to disturb her and frighten her, and that, come what would, she should never return to that house.

"Of course not," said Oliver quietly; "there is nothing whatever to fear from those people. Try to tell me now just what Dawson said."

"Must I, Oliver?"

"Certainly you must."

"He said that I am insane to live here with you, that everybody knows you are an adventurer, that—oh dear!—that I am demoralized and incapable of distinguishing between right and wrong——"

She put her hands to her eyes and leaned both elbows on the table. Her tears fell between her fingers; he put his arm around her, saying there was nothing to fear from anybody.

"No—oh no. I am silly to be frightened, but the—the creature said a—a horrid thing——"

"What, Dulcie?"

"He—he said that I—I am your——"

She laid her head on the table, crying as though her heart had broken.

He let her remain until her grief changed to a hurt resentment, and she sat up, looking at him with cheeks aflame.

"I am ashamed—it was such a cruel lie—and to think of the horror of such a thing! Do other people believe that I—I—am that kind of a girl?"

Other people did think it and believe it. And he knew it.

"But—but I had not the money to give you a home alone—" he blurted out, answering his self accusation to her. She had not accused him; she did not understand what he meant when he spoke.

"I did what I could," he said sullenly, as though stung by a retort from her; yet she had been silent and he knew it.

"It is not your fault," she said, vaguely comprehending that he felt he had failed in something

toward her; "I know how good and patient you have been with me, always. What do you care for that horrible Klaw man and his lies!"

That she should offer him consolation for a wrong done her by him completed his unhappiness.

"It is terrible," she said, quite calmly, "and if people believe that of us—why—why the disgrace must hurt you, too, Oliver. And to think I never imagined such a thing! Oh, I am selfish and careless! I never considered what the sacrifice has been to you; how could I? And you have been so patient, keeping me here with you while people slandered you."

She covered his hands with both of hers; he looked at her amazed, almost ready to laugh at her misinterpretation of the situation. But there was no use in telling her that it is never the man in such cases who suffers from slander.

"Dulcie," he said, "the fault is mine; I should have begged or borrowed to have found you a home somewhere else. I will do it now; you will always be in my care, but we must not live so near together."

"But—I want to——"

"So do I, but it is not best."

"Yes, it is; I can not stay alone; it almost kills me."

"There is nothing else for us, Dulcie."

"Yes, there is! I can not go away by myself. I have nobody—nobody in the world!—and the

darkness of a strange room, all alone in a strange house—and the silence at night, and no one to say good-night to—oh, Oliver, I can not go back to that—indeed, I can not after all the happiness I have had here. I go to bed without fear; I know you are here, writing by your lamp long after I am safe asleep; nothing frightens me, nothing makes me afraid! If I lie awake it is to think how safe I am and how good you are. I listen to the rustle of your pad—I hear your pen on the paper—I hear you tear up sheets, and crumple up sheets, and scrape matches to light your pipe; and I hear your chair when you push it back to rise and walk up and down. Oliver, I am afraid without you; don't send me away!”

After a silence, he said: “What do you wish?”

“I wish to stay,” she answered.

“Then people will believe——”

“It is none the less a lie,” she said, with clear eyes meeting his.

“Yet—you can not stay, Dulcie—don't you see that slander hurts?”

“Dear,” she said, very humbly, “I forgot; I am asking too much.”

“No, no,” he said, touched to the quick; “slander doesn't hurt men—it makes no difference to me, Dulcie,—it is you I am trying to think of—upon my soul, I hope I can at least devote one unselfish thought to you.”

“You have never done anything else,” she said, catching fire at the emotion in his voice and face;

"you have been truer than a brother, more tender than a lover—you have been my shelter in sad days; you have saved me from the terror of loneliness; you have healed every hurt, every sorrow."

She spoke with the exaltation and exaggerations of the very young—her emotion stilted her speech and made it solemnly childish; but in her soft eyes, and in the generous blood that mantled her cheeks, he read the deep, true gratitude that rests only in a blameless heart.

He sat silent, trying to understand this strange, sweet nature that hazard had dealt with without mercy.

"What are we to do?" he said at last.

"Nothing—unless I harm you by staying," she said, wistfully.

"But I harm you, Dulcie."

"How can you?"

"By giving the world a reason for talking."

"We give the world no reason," she said gravely.

She began to fascinate him with her unlettered logic.

"Once," he said, watching the effect of his words, "I bent over you and kissed you. Have you forgotten?"

"No," she said, faintly; "I was ashamed."

"I only said it because you can see that I am like others—not a fit guardian for you, Dulcie."

"You never—did it again."

"Would you resist, Dulcie?"

She drew her hand away from where it rested on

his, raised it, then let it fall. Two fingers touched his wrist.

"Why do you ask me?" she said, controlling the unsteadiness in her voice.

He scarcely heard her; the touch of her hand thrilled him. He took it up, she withdrew it again, watching him with soft, uncertain eyes. When he bent toward her she lowered her dainty head, then, as their lips met, she leaned back, his face resting on hers, her hands covering her closed eyes.

When she pushed him away she was in tears and there was a frightened look in her face that startled him.

"Don't look like that, Dulcie," he said, scarcely knowing what he was saying.

"I can't help it when you kiss me."

She was his for the word—for a caress, for a whisper. He had only to stretch out his arms, she would not resist, she would ask nothing, no promise, no faith. It rested with him what he should teach her that life holds for women,—as men have taught since the dawn of life.

She was his at the first caress—evil and good were words,—he the interpreter, and his acts her gospel. In her ignorance of love, and of sin through love, she feared neither, dumbly watching him there, confused, expectant, wondering what she found so sweet, so thrilling, so distressing in his caress. She wept a little; she felt unnerved and bewildered, yet there was nothing of fear in her heart, no dread of him.

"What is the use, Dulcie," he said, resting his head heavily on his hand; "this cannot go on—safely. We are both too young to be very wise, we are a temptation to each other in spite of your innocence and my knowledge."

He pushed his chair away, throwing one arm over the upholstered back.

"I've been all sorts of a fool," he said, "but it never occurred to me I had any talent for the contemptible. If I am weak it is well I should know it before I become vicious, Dulcie. You cannot stay here; I am like all the rest. We're a rotten lot—we unclassed pariahs."

"What are you saying?" she cried, reproaching him with tender eyes; "is it a wicked thing for you—for me to let you kiss me?"

"No—not that; there is no reason for me to do it; it's weak—hopelessly weak."

"But—if you want to—and I—I do not resist—"

"Good heavens!" he said roughly, "it's exactly that,—you don't resist! Can't you see the danger?"

"Danger?" she repeated, perplexed and curiously resentful.

"Yes, of course. If you don't resist, where will this end?—what will happen, Dulcie?"

"I don't care what happens," she said, lowering her eyes.

"You—you don't care?" he repeated.

She shook her head.

What love might be she had no idea; love to

her was such a remote contingency, remote and meaningless as death. She had never thought their affection meant more than its face value to either of them; and, as for the kiss, it was nothing significant, merely an impulse that ended in exciting and thrilling her with a delicate shame, a consternation not entirely unpleasant.

"Listen, Dulcie," he said; "there is nothing in what we have done—as you say—nothing to perplex either of us, so don't look as though you were going to cry. We are two very sensible people, you and I, and we are going to decide what is best for you to do; and then we'll do it."

But she was tired of the argument; she shook her head, saying she wished to stay with him, that he was silly to fear love,—that neither he nor she knew what love meant.

"So I am going to stay," she said brightly, "and that is quite sufficient for you to know."

She slipped away with a gesture of adieu, looking back, as she reached the door of her own room, to see whether the trouble had left his eyes too.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SUMMONS.

In which Oliver finds an empty room.

WHEN Oliver walked into the office of *Zig-Zag*, the cashier was rather more prompt than usual with the check.

"Hello!" said Oliver, "this is a blank check, Mr. Botts."

"I know it," said Botts impudently.

"Well, what does it mean?" demanded Oliver, staring at him.

"Ask the governor," replied Botts briefly, retiring to the interior of his wire cage.

Oliver, holding the check in his gloved hand, walked into Tom Fydo's room. Fydo was at work, but he glanced up at Oliver solemnly as the latter laid his hand on the back of the writer's chair.

"What does a blank check mean, Tom?" asked Oliver.

"I don't know," said Fydo, "but the governor is in there and he wants to see you, I believe."

As Oliver turned away with an unpleasant foreboding of trouble, the rat-faced office boy entered and hailed him with his customary freedom:

"Say, the governor wants youse to bring the check to him."

"Thank you, my infant Chesterfield," replied Oliver, a retort most distasteful to the boy, who suspected hidden derision, and muttered darkly about somebody who would "git de g. b." before many minutes had elapsed.

"What's the g. b., Tom?" asked Oliver, who was not yet post-graduate in his country's argot.

But Fydo refused to explain, and Oliver went slowly into Smith's private office, still holding the strange check in his fingers.

Smith was at his desk; he pretended not to see Oliver at first, but Oliver called his attention to his existence very promptly by laying the blank check on the desk under Smith's fat face.

"Well, well, Mr. Lock!" said Smith, looking up with a pout, "what is the trouble now?"

"None that I know of," replied Oliver quietly.

That passed the deal to Smith, who did not care for it. He coughed, wiped his glasses, picked up the check, and said;—"Ah—yes—I—um—recollect."

Oliver waited for him to explain what he recollected, which he seemed in no hurry to do.

Finally Oliver said: "Will you fill out the check, Mr. Smith?"

"The fact is, Mr. Lock," said Smith, "your work is not satisfactory."

"Why?" said Oliver. His heart sank, but he spoke coolly.

"I have asked you to spice your stuff and you won't."

"I don't know what you mean by spice," replied Oliver, colouring up.

"Well, I'll explain if I am obliged to. Your stuff is all very pretty and dainty, but it's too cursed literary—the points are too fine, too subtle; you write over the heads of our readers. I can't pay eighty dollars a week for three columns that nobody reads—and I won't,—damned if I do!"

Oliver was silent.

"I'm going to make *Zig-Zag* popular; I want spice, I want to hoist the skirts of decency far enough—not too far—but just far enough to make you whistle through your teeth. Scent the idea, Lock?"

"Certainly," said Oliver, "the idea is filthy enough to scent."

"What's that!" demanded Smith with a face like a congested baby.

"I said, in substance," replied Oliver, "that your ideas are more or less offensive."

"I'll allow no one to talk like that in this office!" snapped Smith, pouting with anger and astonishment.

"Then refrain from offending," said Oliver, controlling his desire to fling the ink-pot at his chief's fat head.

"I'll refrain from filling out that check," bawled Smith, "if you answer me again."

"Oh, no, you won't," replied Oliver between

tightening lips; "and I'll trouble you to fill out that check at once."

Now Smith was the sort of coward that dreads the annoyance of a personal encounter. He saw that Oliver meant mischief; he thought of the damage to his papers, his clothes, and his eye-glasses, which would follow fisticuffs. Besides, he knew he could not avoid filling out the check sooner or later.

He picked up a pen with an insulting laugh, saying he could not refuse charity where it was needed; and Oliver crumpled up the check, snapped it into his face, and strolled out, for he felt in a most murderous frame of mind.

Before his excitement had cooled enough to fill him with dismay at the prospect before him, he had reached Union Square. What on earth was he to do for money? Dulcie must live; so must he, for that matter.

To find himself here on the pavement without means, enraged him when he recollected all the work he had done for nothing. He thought of his two books and it made him furious to remember that neither had brought him one single penny. He stopped short in his aimless walk; across the square he could see Mr. Chatterton Mawly's office, where his books were published by that scented and benevolent friend of young authors.

For a week or more Oliver had expected a check from Mr. Mawly. There was no doubt that the two books were selling, he had heard that everywhere. Even those literati who exist to aid in the

strangulation of individuality, had been seriously divided in their opinions concerning Oliver's last book, "The Self-Satisfied." Youthful authors had praised it with the intemperate enthusiasm of the very young, a generous mistake which always defeats its own ends.

The bulk of the press condemned it vigourously, a proceeding that advertised it and procured for Oliver the respect of those whom he knew and the tribute of curiosity from everybody who read the book.

And yet, from this book, he had not received a penny.

Thinking of these things he crossed the street and ascended the stairs leading to the shabby offices of Mr. Chatterton Mawly. Oliver knew that Mr. Mawly was there from the gust of perfume that smote him on the dark stairway. He entered the room without ceremony and looked around to find it tenantless.

The room was bare of furniture, too, save for a big desk and a chair. Packing boxes lay about in every direction, filled with Mr. Mawly's publications, ready for shipment. Oliver was well aware that Mawly's books were to be found on every railway train, every hotel news-stand, and he felt reasonably certain that whatever check was due him would not be insignificant.

Mr. Mawly was in the next room talking to a young woman, who, Oliver supposed, was offering Mr. Mawly a book for publication. He could not

help but hear the conversation; the conversation itself was very familiar, too :

“Yes,” Mr. Mawly was saying, “I thank you for your courtesy. I will be pleased to consider the immediate publication of your novel, ‘A Bride’s Temptation,’ and I shall hope to include it in Mawly’s Monuments, Cloth, one dollar, paper fifty cents,—also in Mawly’s Contemporary Classics;—‘Woody, not Won!’ by the author of——”

A wagon rumbling through the street below drowned the voice of Mr. Mawly. Oliver stood at the window, biting his lip impatiently, while from the rear room Mawly went on in the familiar formula he had come to know.

Presently the conversation ceased; Oliver heard Mawly conducting his prey to the stairs, and he turned with the dull interest of a fellow victim to see who the girl might be. It was Violet Highlands; she did not see Oliver, and Mawly bowed her out in a perfumed breeze of compliments.

When Mr. Mawly saw Oliver, he did not seem particularly pleased. However, he shook his hand with affected cordiality and made a jocular inquiry concerning a new book to bolster up the two that he had published.

“I wrote you for a check,” said Oliver; “I have received no reply.”

“A check, my dear Mr. Lock!” exclaimed Mawly, pretending to relish the pleasantry.

“I am quite serious,” said Oliver; “I know the books are selling. I need the money very badly,

and if a check is not yet due you can give me an acceptance to discount. I must have some money from my books at once."

"Your books," said Mr. Mawly solemnly, "have not sold sufficiently to pay for publication."

"What!" said Oliver in angry astonishment.

"I refer you to our Mr. Welcher. He will gladly go over our ledgers with you," said Mr. Mawly suavely.

"Very well," replied Oliver, "where is he? I should like to see these ledgers at once."

"Mr. Welcher is in Sioux City," replied Mawly.

"And the ledgers?"

"In Sioux City, at our main office."

"How many copies have been sold," asked Oliver, resolutely controlling his temper.

"That I cannot tell you without the ledgers," replied Mawly, with the faintest approach to a sneer.

Oliver looked steadily into his polished green eyes. Then he walked out, sick at heart, not knowing where to go or where to turn. Nor could he see how he was to force Mawly to an accounting. He had no proof that Mawly lied; the books were in Sioux City—if they existed at all; he had no written agreement to aid him in the matter, no scrap of writing to prove he owned the copyright of his own books.

Oliver turned homeward. The fault, after all, had been his own; he had neglected the commonest business precautions with this probable swindler and he would have to suffer for his own imbecility.

But the worst of it was that it was not he alone who would be the sufferer; Dulcie must suffer too.

How could he have been so blind? Why, the fellow's flat, boneless face was enough to label him, —the green agate eyes, the stench of scent in his clothes, the lying tones of his plausible voice had all condemned him in advance. What a fool he had been to trust to him! Any office boy down town would know better than to deal as he had dealt; any tenpenny clerk would have more business common-sense in a minute than he had displayed in six months.

"Publishers are no better and no worse than other business men," Weyward often repeated to him, "but they have to deal with a class of sentimentalists known as authors, and naturally, being men of business, they do the best for themselves that they can. But there exist disreputable publishers who do not stop at theft, and these people fight like rats to retain what plunder they can. A suit or a threat of jail does not scare them; no calf in the abattoir is as helpless as the bleating sheep-eyed author in their clutches; the popular symbol concerning the cat in hell without claws might safely be applied to the miserable author in the grip of those publishers."

Whether or not Chatterton Mawly was one of these honest publishers he had no definite means of knowing. He cared little, anyway; he was sick of books and publishers, he was sick of trying to win his bread with books, he was mortified, tired, fagged

out with the gentle art of letters. No so-called respectable publisher would have his books; sickly critics and stunted youths were his moribund prophets, the unclassed chanted his dirge and waved nicotine-soiled fingers at each other discussing the "new man," Oliver Lock.

He believed his work had fallen on barren soil and that he himself had fallen among thieves; he found no hope in the few newspapers who noticed his work, and he wondered what was left for him to do in a world that so utterly ignored him and the wares he had laboured less to make than to sell.

But, after all, what did he know of this world within the city? He saw it from the edge of a rat-hole, that was all. Was there wealth, culture, intelligence in the iron city? He saw nothing of it save the outside of splendid homes, the outsides of carriages, the exterior of theatres, museums, cathedrals, colleges, universities.

So he walked on, staring stupidly at the people passing, noting apathetically the transverse clefts in the brick and mortar that men call streets, until he came to the trees in the square where he lived.

As he entered the Monastery a sudden wave of homesickness came over him,—of longing for his own world again—for the calmer, older civilisation that the grey ocean barred from his tired eyes—a yearning for the quiet of ancient cities, the fair speech of simpler races, the tranquillity of a continent where no man hastened toward the goal of

life, knowing that with every step he also drew the closer to his end.

Physically and mentally tired out, he climbed the dark uncarpeted stairs where the cold stench of gas leaked from black corners, where the dust of months rose from the creaking boards.

At his own landing he hesitated, dreading lest Dulcie should see the worry of failure in his eyes.

No, he could not go in to her yet; an hour would drive some of the bitterness from his heart, and then there would be time to think. He turned aside and knocked at Trivol's studio. Trivol hailed him, and he entered to find that young gentleman on the top of a step-ladder, in an attitude recalling the eccentric saint who spent some years imitating a stork to the glory of Heaven.

"What the mischief are you doing up there?" asked Oliver.

"Keeping warm," replied Trivol cheerfully.

"Warm?" repeated Oliver, puzzled.

"Yes; I'm broke and can't afford a fire, so I light the gas and sit on top of this ladder. There's thirty degrees difference between ceiling and floor. Come up and try it. My models all kick because I have no fire, so I pose them up here," continued Trivol; "but the drawings that result are idiotic, Oliver, simply idiotic; I see nothing but the underside of their toes. What's the matter, Oliver? You look ill."

Oliver made a gesture, opening both hands

wearily, and sat down, eyes closed, head resting on his clenched fist.

"I don't know what to do," he said; "nobody pays me for my work, nobody asks for it, either. I could stand it if I were alone in the world, but this sort of thing hurts me now."

"On account of—of the pretty girl—Dulcie Wyvern?"

"Yes—on her account. Heaven knows, I've made a mess of it so far; I must have been insane to invite the slander that could not fail to come. Trivol, *you* never thought any harm of her, did you?"

"I think none—now."

Oliver raised his head. "Did you at first?"

"I believe we all did," replied Trivol. "If we were wrong you have dealt unfairly by her, Oliver. Lord! A nursing child would have had his suspicions of such an arrangement."

The rebuke went home.

"You certainly couldn't have cared much for Miss Wyvern's future," said Trivol.

"I didn't, Dick, and that's the miserable truth. Miss Wyvern is the most inexperienced, the most unselfish girl I ever knew. She's had no chance; the pack have been after her full cry from the beginning—and to think that I should have been one of them! Lord, Dick, I'm worse than they!"

"You're a very generous boy with your head stuffed full of your own work," said Trivol. "Your handicap gave you no chance; you carried too

much weight to undertake another burden. But as long as you did undertake it, you should have done it with heart and soul until it brought you to your knees."

"I know," said Oliver, with set lips.

"There's nothing to do now but to give Miss Wyvern a chance; that means to stand out of her way."

"I know it."

"Work yourself to the bone to give her a chance; you did not owe her that at first, but you owe it to her now."

Trivol shoved his paint-stained hands into his pocket and slowly mounted his step-ladder.

From the top he looked down on Oliver in silence.

"Dick," said Oliver, "it is too late."

"There is," observed Trivol, "another way—not much of a way——"

Oliver looked up at him, startled.

"A way," continued Trivol, tranquilly, "that possibly smacks of the melodrama. But it appeals to me."

"What is it?" asked Oliver, in a low voice.

"Marry," replied Trivol, rolling a cigarette. "You're both rank outsiders, you know, and you'll never be anything else."

He smoked his cigarette to the end before either spoke again. His model strolled in before he had finished a second cigarette, and Oliver rose to go.

"My!" observed the girl, "ain't you comfortable a-huddlin' up there like our gobbler after sunset."

"Thanks, I'm sure," said Trivol, scarcely flattered at the comparison; "you're late, my rural critic, and I want to know why!"

The big, handsome country lass tossed her head, and glanced with frank disapproval at Oliver.

"I've been helpin' a lady to get her boxes into a cab," she said, with a motion of her plump hand in the direction of Oliver's room.

"What lady?" asked Oliver, sharply.

"Yourn—I guess," said the girl, giggling. "I reckon she wouldn't have run away if you was good to her."

Oliver turned on his heel and went swiftly to his own room. The door between his room and Dulcie's was open; he went in.

The bureau, the dresser, the wash-stand were empty and dismantled. Scraps of paper and string, bits of crumpled ribbon, an empty medicine bottle or two lay about the floor. Her valise and box were gone, her closet was empty of hats or clothes; nothing remained but the shabby furniture.

Oliver turned back into his own room, where the little dog followed him, barking. He looked around for a scrap of paper, a message, anything to explain her flight; he searched on the furniture, on his desk, among the leaves of the manuscripts scattered under the table.

Finding nothing, he stood still in the centre of the room, staring vacantly about, until the little dog's persistent caresses drew his attention. And the little dog was wise, too, for around his woolly

neck he bore a new bit of blue ribbon from which dangled an envelope for his master.

Grippe barked excitedly as Oliver snatched the letter, then, his duty done, he ran around in a circle to subdue his triumphant emotions, and presently mounted a chair to watch his master read the message he had guarded so faithfully:

DEAR, DEAR OLIVER,

My mother is very ill and has sent for me. I must go; after all, she is my mother. I feel so strangely about leaving; it is so hard for me to go. Oliver—you don't know how I have been crying, here at your desk,—I laid my head among your papers and waited for you to come back, and I cried all the while.

You don't come back, Oliver, and I must pack my things, for they say she is very ill, and so I must not wait.

Dear, dear Oliver, don't forget me, for I am frightened at being alone again. But perhaps you will be better able to write when I am not there—perhaps it is better for you not to have me to care for.

I have been thinking that I am too selfish to take your money for an education that may not enable me to return anything to you for a long time. It has always hurt me to take the money you worked so hard for; I have no right to anything—unless it be your affection—and I am not sorry that I am going. Oh, but yes I am, dear, dear Oliver! It is breaking my heart to go.

Don't forget me; don't go away into the world somewhere and leave me.

I am kissing Grippe now—and I am tying the ribbon around his neck. He knows a great deal, he

is such a wise dog. I have whispered something into his ear—and he promises to tell no one in all the world what I have told him. Ask him, Oliver—I said that he might tell you.

Dear Oliver—oh, if you were only here!

Your

DULCIE.

The cab is here, and you have not come. I am fearfully unhappy. Good-by.

Late that night, Weyward sauntered in to find Oliver sitting at the table, head buried in the papers of his manuscript.

“I knocked a dozen times; what’s the trouble, Oliver?” he demanded.

The boy turned a haggard face toward him, muttering; “Trouble? Oh, yes, I’m in trouble. Let me alone, Weyward,—let me alone!”

CHAPTER XXII.

A TABLE FOR TWO.

Concerning two views of life, but admitting that there are more than two views of everything—including love and death.

AT seven o'clock that night the waiter from Spinkle's brought in dinner for two as usual. Oliver lifted his head heavily, watching the spreading of the cloth with dull eyes. When the covers for two were laid, the pint of claret uncorked, the celery and olives placed, he stood up involuntarily, laying his hand on the back of Dulcie's chair.

Minute after minute passed, the waiter blinked pensively, watching the small dog. Grippe also waited, wistful brown eyes on the door of Dulcie's room, ears alert to catch the rustle of her gown.

The waiter stole a glance at Oliver, shuffled his felt-shod feet, then coughed behind his apron.

The quarter of an hour allowed him had passed and he was due at Spinkle's to tend bar.

"Pardon, sir," he said mildly; "may I serve the soup?"

Oliver leaned both arms on Dulcie's chair.

"You need not serve—us; you may go," he said under his breath.

The waiter hesitated :

“ And,—pardon, sir—but to-morrow am I to lay two covers? ”

“ Yes,” said Oliver in a dull voice.

When the waiter had gone, Grippe walked to the door of Dulcie’s room, sniffing at the unlighted silence suspiciously. After a while he came back and sat down at his master’s feet.

Twice Oliver turned, thinking he heard sounds in the darkened room. Darkness is the door to the past, full of pale outlines dimly revealed, hiding movements and sounds and unseen eyes, and voices whispering behind shadows.

At last he seated himself; but he touched nothing; the dishes chilled on the table; the ice under the celery and olives melted.

Weyward came again that night, careless of rebuke or impatience. It roused a strange anger in Oliver to see him sit there in Dulcie’s chair. But Weyward paid Oliver little attention at first; he lighted his cigar, helped himself to the salted almonds and claret, fed Grippe from the untouched plates, and finally filled Oliver’s glass and bade him drink.

“ Can’t you let me alone ! ” said Oliver unsteadily.

“ They say,” observed Weyward, “ that Dulcie has gone away.”

“ Who says so ? ” asked Oliver, with a dark flush under his eyes.

“ It’s rumoured. Is it true? ”

“Something of the sort. Don’t worry me, Weyward.”

“No—I won’t worry you. Shall I go?”

Oliver looked across the table at the kindly young eyes.

“Trouble is no mystery to me, either; but your attitude toward it gives it a dignity that it does not possess. Wisdom is the only sorrow whose dignity merits our deference,” said Weyward.

“Wisdom?” repeated Oliver sullenly. “He is a wise man who lived yesterday; he is wiser still who died last year.”

“That,” observed Weyward, “is the first whine I ever heard from you, and—it will probably be the last.”

Oliver glanced up angrily, then dropped his tired head on his hand again.

“Yes,” he said, “it is my last whine, Weyward. I’m tired—I’m a very tired man.”

He sat staring at the table, tracing with his left hand arabesques and phantom designs over the cloth.

“My mistakes have tired me out,” he said, speaking in the same colourless voice; “I’m tired and perplexed with all these constant errors. I don’t know where to turn, to win the right of living; I don’t know how it is done. Work brings me nothing. I only bring trouble to those I care for.”

He looked up with a faint smile: “I’m not whining; I wish to live and to go on!”

“That,” said Weyward, “is the only solution of

the riddle—go on. When you stumble for the last time you'll arrive—somewhere."

"Yes—somewhere—and wiser than he who starts to-morrow."

After Weyward had tired of his cigar and had finally laid it away in a saucer among its own ashes, he leaned both elbows on the table, saying; "Tell me what troubles you, Oliver; you don't mind, I'm sure."

"No, I don't mind. I've lost my salary, I've lost all I hoped for in my books, I've lost some courage—not all—and——"

"And——" repeated Weyward after a silence.

"I have lost a woman her reputation."

Weyward turned a cynical face toward him, saying that reputations were a drug in the market, but the black scowl that gathered on Oliver's brow warned him to silence.

"Women," said Oliver, under his breath, "may perjure themselves in our behalf on earth, but in that day when truth only is the testimony, our last defence will find our witnesses on the other side."

"You mean—in Heaven?" inquired Weyward sarcastically.

"If the court sits there," replied Oliver.

"Then," said Weyward, "I'll see that the prosecution does not lack witnesses when my case is called."

After a long silence Oliver said: "I have always hated your attitude toward women."

"Are you quite stainless yourself?" inquired Weyward.

"Not quite," replied Oliver, with an ugly look across the table, "but I doubt whether anybody will be the worse for the slippers I might have claims to collect."

"I have certainly an interesting collection," said Weyward, laughing.

He lighted another cigar and leaned back with a queer light in his eyes that made them, for a moment, almost dreadful.

"What do you know about women?" he asked, at length.

"Only enough to envy them their decency."

"Well," said Weyward, "many authorities attribute souls to women—it is a matter of opinion, of course." He leaned forward with a savage smile, horrible on his pallid face.

"If they have," he said, "the one I married sold hers at auction."

"Married," repeated Oliver, amazed.

"Why, yes; didn't you know it? Everybody's free to know it. I married before I was of age—one of your Americans. Our divorce was a great success."

He relighted his cigar at the lamp, sneering to himself.

"Certainly, my dear fellow," he went on; "the divorce was a very great success; my name was dragged from Scotland to Wales and back again by way of Paris. You see, they thought a good deal of my people in England, and no notoriety was notorious enough for me. Why, the most brilliant

newspaper men put themselves out to gather details for publication. And I was very young then—scarcely eighteen, Oliver, and I had been very, very much in love;—and I had never kissed a woman in all my life before I kissed my wife——”

He shot an ugly look across the table, then laughed.

“And to think you never heard of that famous case.”

“I did hear of it—in Paris—but I never thought of you.”

“The name was the same.”

“I never thought of you,” repeated Oliver.

“Well,” said Weyward, “it’s all one. As for my wife—why, she married again and she seems to be happy—and so am I, Oliver, so am I. Life is so amusing, too—for sometimes my wife comes to my little evenings—you know the ones I mean—and—I believe I recently added to my collection a pair of slippers scented with mignonette.”

“Your wife!” he said horrified.

“Yes—once. I tell you because you are my friend—and, if you meet her, it is well you should know. She has more than a single pair of slippers.”

Weyward’s face had turned quite white; again he relighted his cigar with trembling fingers.

“So you see, Oliver, my friend, that I’m fond of company—when I want it. Am I not right in maintaining that knowledge is the only sorrow to be greeted with dignity?”

But the cigar fell from his blanched lips; he

dropped his elbows on the table, covering his head with both hands.

“You see,” he said in a broken, querrulous voice, “I have never been able to kill the love she could not kill for me. I have dragged it about,—but it won’t die, Oliver, it won’t die.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE ANATOMY OF SUCCESS.

In which three people make a start in the world, and a fourth bids fair to outdistance them.

NOVEMBER began—and ended, without one word from Dulcie. At first he could scarcely work for thinking of her: he waited for the mail to be delivered in the morning before he went out, he returned to await the noon delivery, he haunted the letter-box in the lower hallway until the postman had come and gone. Day after day, filled with an indefinable fear, he waited for a sign from her; sick with apprehension he wandered through the city,—never so far but that he could return to forestall the postman at the letter box. People who knew him spoke of his haggard face to others; many believed he was overworking himself, one or two suggested he might be drinking.

Both propositions were partly true; the poor food that he could afford he scarcely tasted; his sorrow and foreboding, his torturing wretchedness and anxiety had made him so morbid that he sought relief through work at last in startled desperation; he worked from daylight to midnight, craving the oblivion of exhaustion and the brief

sleep that fled from his eyes at the first dawn of light. He drank to stimulate his mind, but the reaction from a week of drunken fever left him with a horror of alcohol that cut short his appetite for more.

November went out trailing a furious wind in its wake; the square bristled with naked trees, the fountain no longer dripped among its water plants; the basin lay empty, and the bricked pool was an arena where shivering sparrows lurked watching the dead leaves racing around the granite parapet. Dry, prickly buttons swung from the stark sycamores, dropping one by one; the grass grew darker and more brilliant, taking on that strange winter lustre that seems a parody on spring,—a malicious mockery in the presence of gaunt boughs and juiceless shrubs choked to the roots with rotting leaves.

By day, from his dingy window, he could see the memorial arch through the network of leaden branches; at twilight the electric lights turned its marble to a leprous pallour. Like a monstrous white headstone it rose, in the moonlight, fascinating him, staring at him through the trees; the silence of the cemetery crept into the square when the last stroke of midnight floated off into the city, and he was alone at his silvered casement with the moon and the blank arc-lights and the monument of marble—and the dreadful silence. Then the tracery of shadows came to lay their shapes across his bed; slim patterns of naked twigs, shadowed on his wall, stirred when the wind rose;

fragile branches intermeshed, wonderful as fairy-frost crystals enamelled on a wintry pane, etched his low ceiling,—and moved, and moved, delicately, exquisitely interlacing their phantom strands.

What wonder that the imprint of the pale light, the loneliness of midnight, was on his face ! What wonder that the shadows fell among the very words he wrote, tinging the pages of his “Iron City” to a sombre half-tone, through which the reader should read fearfully, dreading lest the lurking spectre of unshrouded Truth might cry out suddenly from some hidden page, finding him unprepared.

His book had become a fierce slow thing ; he brooded among its pages, searching his seared heart to wring it dry of truth ; through the glass darkly he saw man’s guilt tracing upon a million brows the mark of them who destroy souls.

He wrote of the flesh and blood and iron, of the vast altar rusted with its holocaust,—but yet an altar, acceptable as a gift to the Most High.

For there was the solemn vibration of hope through it all ; hope was echoed in the clang of iron, ringing blow upon blow ; hope tolled through the throbbing of the city ; hope trembled among the iron masses groaning under the bedded iron of its deep foundations.

The book was the story of one who, like himself, had come into his empty heritage, with the blue sky over him and the grey sea behind him, and, before him, the iron ramparts, rusting in the sun.

He wrote of the hell of sound ringing, increasing,

flung across the arched sky; he wrote of the sheer brick cliffs, the cañons, the slitted clefts, the iron crags set with windows; he wrote of the black flood pouring through iron ravines, now north, now south. And over all, high up among the bright sunbeams tipping the crests of iron-shod spires, always fluttered a little flag—a tiny rainbow thing, brilliant in the blue well of heaven.

Again and again his book hung sullenly back, inert, insensible; but he took his theme and held to it, setting his teeth as one who strangles a dreadful thing seeking to escape into the shadows from which it crept.

He felt that he had no hope for the book—but that was untrue, for no man has ever written hopelessly. He expected nothing from men for his labour—he dropped his pen at times, cursing them for his torture, yet he wrote on.

When the first grey gleam from the December sky stole through the leafless trees outside his window, he slept through the morning for the first time in many days. It was a wholesome sleep, too; his dream was peaceful, and he awoke from it at peace. He had been dreaming of Dulcie, yet he awoke without that keen hurt in his heart that had dragged line after line through the dark circles under his eyes.

There was a strange tranquillity in his mind, a quiet resolution that he scarcely understood. It was nothing more than a new form in which hope was manifesting itself; he recognised this after

a while, yet his buoyancy neither flagged nor diminished.

That strange sensation that comes to all in the depths of a stern struggle, that quickening of some forgotten fibre that arouses hope once more, had come to him. All would be well some day—trouble would vanish like a dull shower at sunrise.

Truly enough, December's dawn held for him more than a blast of icy wind. It held more than that for others too, like Ivan Lacroix, and Tessie Delmour, and even Violet Highlands.

There were, in December, three successes made, among the outsiders, in New York town,—but Tessie, perhaps, achieved something higher yet.

Ivan's success came first, for his canvas, "Isis," set the unclassed agog from the day that the Academy opened its dingy storm doors.

The reticence of the painting, the superb mastery of tools, the half-contemptuous exhibition of power, apparently scarcely exerted, appalled the younger schools and set the knees of the academicians a-knocking.

But, through the blatant chorus of praise, the mouthings of toothless criticism, the responsive bray of the public stirring in its manger, came the clear and unmistakable voice of authority, calling the work good.

Violet's success came next; the newspapers had found something to talk about and paraphrase and cackle over in a book called "A Bride's Temptation." Style was conspicuously absent, which

simplified part of the mystery of its enormous success with the public, its story was so innocently naked, so hopelessly archaic, that the critics suspected a triumph of the "pure line" simplicity. Many whispered of symbolism somewhere, and mooned and maundered among its pages, searching for the key to its hidden hieroglyphics. Perhaps the book merited attention, for it was really a miracle of prattle and predestined nonsense, woven into a story as artlessly shameless as any cheerful tale that whiled away the Thousand And One Nights—with detail unexpurgated.

There was no mystery to its success after the pulpit attacked it; and when Mr. Chatterton Mawly advertised that fact as widely as possible, legitimate criticism threw up its hands and retired.

The third success came to Oliver Lock; not all at once, for it had been incubating since "The Winged Boy" sailed into view over the literary horizon. "The Self-Satisfied" was a growing success, too genuine to be longer flouted, denied or overlooked. One and all the critics began to accord the author the honour of their attention; they neither disguised their antagonism nor their approval; they began to squabble, too, and their bickering aroused others of their craft.

Like a chicken who has a morsel too big to swallow, but still a morsel to be investigated at leisure and in privacy, the first serious critic rushed off with Oliver's books, squawking his excitement. Immediately the other barnyard denizens, pensively

picking on the common dunghill, rushed after him who bore the toothsome morsel. The cackling was very loud, especially when some critic relinquished his grasp of the coveted morsel long enough to peck a squawking comrade.

"It is a healthy sign for a book," said Weyward; "when critics fall out authors sometimes come to their own."

All these things happened in December, and this was what December brought to Ivan, to Violet, and to Oliver. What it brought to Tessie Delmour was more wonderful still.

Fortune seldom does anything by halves,—though often enough in lesser fractions—and the end of the first week in December brought Oliver a letter from Dulcie Wyvern.

She was in Florida; her mother had been very, very ill, but was stronger. Why had he not written to her? She had waited and waited, hurt by his silence. But probably he had forgotten her—she knew what a burden she had been. Perhaps he might care to know that she was coming to New York, later, with her mother. Another thing he might care to know,—she was certainly far from unhappy. She wished him well, she predicted success and—sent her love to Grippe.

One other thing; both he and she had utterly misunderstood her mother. She should never, never pardon herself for it—never!

If Oliver ever wished to write, he must write to her care of her mother's legal adviser, Dyke Van

Shuyster, Lotus Beach, "The Everglades," Florida.

And that was all, save a little hurt message of adieu.

Weyward sauntered in an hour later to find Oliver in a towering rage, cursing Van Shuyster and Klaw and a few others for variety.

"What the mischief is the matter now?" asked Weyward, serenely stretching out in an armchair to light his cigar.

But Oliver held his peace sullenly, pondering over the theft of his letters. He knew it would be useless for him to write, that every letter he had written had been opened by her mother—perhaps by Van Shuyster.

What they intended to do with the child he could not guess, nor how it came about that Van Shuyster had bobbed up there in Florida.

Tired out and perplexed, he leaned his elbows on the table, vacant eyes fixed on Weyward. The latter was amiably interviewing Grippe, to the small dog's intense satisfaction, for he loved to have his ears rubbed, and to have his emotions stirred by sympathetic inquiries concerning his pedigree.

Jack Payser, passing the open door, stopped to smoke a cigarette with Weyward.

"What a success Ivan is having," he exclaimed, glancing at Oliver's sombre face. "He'll never sell that big canvas, I fancy, but the thing has brought him the offer to decorate the new state capitol of California."

"Good!" said Oliver. "Is he going to take it?"

"Rather! He's tremendously excited about it; he is in the studio packing up now. By the way, that little girl of his will take it hard, I fear."

"Tessie?" asked Weyward.

"Yes; she's helping him pack now; he starts to-night."

"Why doesn't he take her with him?" demanded Oliver, looking up sharply.

"Because he's going to live with his people; they're there in Sacramento. What makes you look like that, Oliver?"

"It's a damned shame!" said Oliver; "he has no right to leave her like that!"

"As for the right," observed Weyward, "considering where he met her——"

"Where did he meet her?" asked Jack Payser, curiously.

Weyward did not answer; Oliver buried his head in his hands again; and Jack shrugged his shoulders.

"Of course he has left her well provided—" he began, but Oliver broke out: "For Heaven's sake, Jack, those details make me sick. The girl will break her heart—and that's the end of such things every time! It's cruel, it's beastly, it's a damnable thing, I tell you! Let me alone."

Jack and Weyward exchanged glances; Oliver was plainly very morbid and irritable, so Jack strolled out again, whistling cheerfully, and Weyward returned to his conversation with Grippe.

Presently he said: "If you're in the humour, Oliver, I've something to tell you."

"What?" asked Oliver sulkily.

"Merely that your books are making such a stir in town that two first-class publishers want to know what you have to offer."

"Two first-class bandits you mean, don't you?"

"No, these bandits observe the laws as rigidly as any respectable business man in the Borough of Manhattan."

"Who are they?"

"One is Playfair, the other is John Stark; the former is an old chap, quite the soul of honour, but very slow and conservative. John Stark is young, a gentleman by birth, scrupulously honourable, and tremendously active. He changes his business methods as the times demand; he is not one of those publishers who sit in the sanctified circle and nod all day at their own toes. There's no humbug, no pretence, nothing consecrated about him. And he wants your work, Oliver."

Oliver looked up with a gleam of interest in his haggard eyes: "Are you serious, Weyward?"

"Perfectly. What have you for the market?"

"I have 'The Iron City,'—all but two chapters. I have a romance, and three short stories, and——"

"What else?"

"I have fifty cents in my pocket,—that is all."

Somebody knocked at the door, and Weyward opened it. Ivan was there, carrying a satchel, and

beside him Tessie stood, terribly pale, in her black hat and fur jacket.

"It's to say good-by," he said, holding out his hand; "I leave for the Pacific coast to-night."

Weyward spoke pleasantly, wishing him the success he deserved; Oliver shook Ivan's hand in silence.

"They bring my picture back to the studio to-night," said Ivan; "Payser has one key—Tessie has the other—if you care to see it again before I send it to Paris."

Weyward thanked him; there was a silence, then Ivan Lacroix laid his hand on Tessie's fur sleeve, and they went away quietly together.

"She was white as a ghost," said Weyward, musingly; "I fancy her colour will improve before he reaches the coast. *Moi—j'ai déjà vu ça!*"

"And I—" broke out Oliver, "I hope I may never see that look on a woman's face again!"

"Well, well," said Weyward pleasantly, "drop the subject—it's painful enough—for I want your company as far as the office of Mr. Mawly."

"What the devil for?" asked Oliver astonished.

"Why, simply to see what I can do for two young idiots whom he has probably swindled."

"I am one of the idiots," said Oliver, laughing outright; "who is the other?"

"The little Highlands girl—you remember her? Of course,—you took tea there once in the early days when you were a lambkin who never heard of the

butcher. Her book is a singularly silly thing—but it's making a fortune for Mawly."

"Hasn't he paid her?"

"Not a penny. Has he ever paid you?"

"Not a penny," said Oliver smiling.

Weyward nodded. "I supposed as much. Oliver, when I was out of town I travelled farther than you knew. For instance, I fancied a trip out west might amuse me, and I went—as far as Sioux City."

Oliver became interested.

"Oh, it was very amusing, I assure you. I looked up Mawly's place there—a little dark room in a frame building. I found 'our' Mr. Welcher too—and I took the liberty of examining his books—in your name."

He lighted a second cigar, laughing easily over his reminiscences of his interview with Mr. Welcher of Sioux City.

"You may not know, Oliver, that I'm more or less of an expert with books. Besides, I had affidavits in my pocket from various book-sellers, touching on their sales of your two books and also of Violet Highlands' story. Now I am prepared to swear out a warrant for the arrest of our benevolent friend Mawly—unless he happens to agree with me that stealing is naughty."

"So," said Oliver at last, "the fellow is a swindler!"

"Rather in that line, I fancy. Shall we stroll around to Union Square?"

Oliver was ready in an instant. Weyward picked up his gloves and stick, and they descended the stairs in silence.

It was a ten minutes' easy walk to the publishing house of Mawly. Neither spoke until they reached the building. Here Weyward opened his watch, compared it with Oliver's, and said ; "Come up in half an hour, Oliver ; I want to see Mawly alone first."

When the last minute of the half-hour had ticked its life away, Oliver sprang up the stairway and entered the office without ceremony.

Mr. Mawly was seated at his desk ; Weyward occupied a chair by the window, tapping with his thorn stick on the bare boards of the floor.

"Oh," sneered Mawly, wheeling around as Oliver entered, "so this begins to savour of conspiracy—"

"Stop !" said Weyward sharply ; "if you are impudent to me, you scented cad, I'll lay my black-thorn across your back !" Then, turning pleasantly to Oliver ; "My dear fellow, Mr. Mawly has considered the question from all its points. He decides, I believe, that he owes you a great deal more than money can repay ; but you will not care for an apology from a cad, so he merely returns your books, plates, copyright, and this check, to you. You need not thank him ; nor need I," he continued rising ; "but we can take our leave with the full expectation that the State will ultimately provide a more limited field of activity for this philanthropic financier."

Oliver glanced at the flat, boneless face, the polished eyes of green agate, the pink-barred shirt and the jewel, then turned on his heel, following Weyward down the stairs and out into Union Square.

"I have Violet's check and copyright transfer in my pocket," said Weyward. "Shall we call on her?"

"Weyward," said Oliver, "you are the best fellow in the world—and—I can't say more."

"I don't know," replied Weyward, sarcastically; "you might imitate my morals, if your flattery is sincere."

"It's not my business to shy at your morals," replied Oliver; "you're a better man with them than I am without them."

"What a boyish man you are!" said Weyward, glancing at Oliver with kindly malice.

Then he began to laugh, adding: "I didn't tell you whom I found up there closeted with Mawly. Fancy! *The Pink Rat* is in Mawly's clutches,—Sidney Jaune gave him a book to publish and now he's trying to get a few dollars out of that benevolent bandit. I heard him trying to bluster and threaten the suave Chatterton, but it was no go, Oliver. Poor devil—I'm sorry for him all the same."

They boarded a north-bound cable-car on Broadway. Weyward never ceased his amiable chatter, and Oliver, with a check in his pocket and his books in his own possession again, was only too happy to listen.

"Violet's check is twenty times as big as yours," said Weyward; "I won't tell you what it is—that would not be fair—but, my son, you see what the reward of true literary distinction is. Style, Oliver, style is what the public longs for. But they get more than that in Violet's little book."

"Where does she live?" asked Oliver, as they left the car close to the wintry park.

"Now I'll tell you where she expects to live," said Weyward, pointing to a house of brown-stone that stood wedged in among its fellows, glittering with plate glass, bronze railings, and a newly polished storm-door. "That's where the little girl is being forced," he continued grimly,—“partly through her native silliness, partly because she's come to the end of her money.”

"What sort of a house is it?" asked Oliver.

"An empty house—now, but redecorated and refurnished. A brougham goes with it."

"Somebody has offered it to that child?" asked Oliver angrily.

"Yes. She hasn't accepted, but things are combining to land her behind those plate-glass windows. Then, too, Salmi Cheedle is such a kind gentleman," he ended with a sneer.

"Where does Violet live now?" asked Oliver.

"Here," replied Weyward, mounting the two brown-stone steps that led to the vestibule of a great red-brick apartment house.

The wall of the vestibule was covered with letter-boxes, under which were electric buttons and cards

bearing the names of the tenants, Miss De Montmorency, Miss Gwendoline Elsmere, Miss Arbutus Van Rensselaer, Miss Inez d'Orleans, and many more names hiding coyly behind undisguised titles, which would certainly have interested most of the courts of Europe as well as the Café de Paris.

At the head of the stairs a door stood partly ajar ; they knocked ; Violet opened it.

Before she could speak, Mazie McNair appeared behind her, sleeves rolled up, laughing over her shoulder and bidding Weyward and Oliver welcome.

" Sylvia is here ; we're having the best time making creamed woodcock in the chafing dish," she chattered, as the young men entered and greeted Sylvia Tring, who bobbed her head.

" Oh, you mustn't touch that sherry ! " cried Violet as Weyward helped himself ; " it's for something else ; we're going to make sherry-cobblers in two or three minutes."

" Isn't it just horrid," said Mazie to Oliver ; " Violet's got to move because that miserable Mawly won't pay her one penny. I tell her that I'd have him arrested—indeed I would, Mr. Lock ! " and she looked very determined and waved her bare arms over which a little flour had dusted.

" You seem to be doing fairly well as far as luncheon is concerned," said Oliver.

Weyward was standing over by the window, talking to Violet in a low voice. Presently he led her into the adjoining room, closing the door without excuse to the others.

"Dear me!" said Sylvia with eyes wide open. "I believe I'd rather like to hear those secrets; wouldn't you, Mazie?"

"There's no secret," said Oliver; "Weyward has taken Violet's book away from the fellow, Mawly, and has brought her what Mawly owed her."

At that moment Weyward and Violet returned, the latter crying and laughing at the same time and holding out her check to Sylvia.

"She's all right now," said Weyward sharply, "provided she goes home with her check. Otherwise it will land her in worse clutches than Cheedle's!"

He spoke with a frank brutality that made Violet's cheeks flame, but he knew his business and went about it without mercy.

"She's a child," he said, turning to Mazie, "and she has nobody here but you and Sylvia and what acquaintances she scrapes up at that doddering old caterwauler's—Signor Ditti's. Tell her that she ought to return to her parents; there's time for her to come here later. There's always room for one more among the unclassed, and no outsider need knock long to be admitted inside the outside zone of society."

As Weyward reached the street a few moments later he said; "Was it not edifying to observe me inculcating morals?"

"You have a right to if anybody has," replied Oliver.

“But think of my collection of slippers.”

“If you had collected as many entire wardrobes you are still a better man than I,” said Oliver with a harsh laugh.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MEN—AND A WOMAN.

Being an instructive view of man's pleasure, and affording a glimpse of a woman who was tired of both man and his pleasures.

"THERE are," said Weyward, "three important literary clubs in the Borough of Manhattan,—I am not of course including any society composed of women with three names——"

"You're not obliged to mention women at all, you know," replied Oliver, buttoning his collar before the cracked mirror in his room.

"Right," said Weyward amiably; "I'll reserve my hydra-headed homage for married cynics. I started to tell you about the Scribblers——"

He lay in the arm chair by the window, watching Oliver invest himself with his long-unused evening dress and white tie.

"Go ahead," said Oliver, struggling with his collar.

"The Authors' Club and the Pen-and-Ink Club are exclusive, but the 'Scribblers' is not. I'm a member. That is where we are going to-night. Are you nervous?"

“Are you a member?” inquired Oliver, turning around with both ends of his necktie in his fingers.

“Yes,” replied Weyward with the trace of a grin.

“Are you an author?”

“I am the author of a pamphlet on bath-tubs—let me send you an autograph copy——”

“You’re not serious?”

“Indeed I am. My pamphlet made me eligible to help them pay their rent; and I’m doing it.”

Oliver resumed his toilet with a blank face, which delighted Weyward.

“Oh, I don’t know why you authors should be so intolerant,” he said; “there have been good stories in bath-tubs since Dorothea twiddled her toes in the brook and Susan used Prayers Soap, and Diana set the dog an Acteon——”

“Bosh,” said Oliver, buttoning his white waistcoat.

But Weyward was not joking; authors had climbed into the famous Scribblers’ Club on ladders of fame composed of flimsier material than Weyward’s pamphlet on bath-tubs. For the club itself he cared nothing; it was the perverse irony in his nature that had led him to present himself as a candidate for palms; nor did it surprise this cynic to be received among the writers of the age for the sum of one hundred dollars fees and seventy-five dollars yearly dues.

“However,” said Weyward, picking up his hat and gloves, “the club is right in making my pamphlet an excuse for my election. The dreary brother-

hood of those who produce books needs the irreverent leavening of those whom books produce. Besides, I've sold them three bath-tubs, Oliver——”

“Come on,” said Oliver, turning the gas lower and following Weyward into the hall.

As they passed Ivan's studio, Weyward noticed a ray of light streaming into the hallway from the transom.

“It's Jack Payser, I fancy,” he remarked.

“Probably; Ivan's picture arrived this evening.”

Oliver moved aside and tried the handle of the door. It turned and the door opened.

The great picture hung from its pulleys in the centre of the studio; before it sat a young girl in furs. Oliver did not speak; Weyward stepped to his side cautiously, and together they stood gazing at the motionless figure before the canvas.

An hour later, as they were approaching the clubhouse through the first young snow storm of the year, Weyward said: “It is well to have lived if one can leave such an achievement behind.”

“Which achievement?” said Oliver harshly; “the painted picture, or that woman in agony at its feet?”

They had already entered the portal through the flying snow, so Weyward held his peace.

The Scribblers were indulging in a reception to their friends,—a harmless pastime, recommended to all who lack mental resources.

The club-rooms were crowded with the bright toilets of women; the sombre evening dress of the

men loomed out in gloomy contrast to the ivory and gold of wall and furniture, and the pale, gilt tapestry, shimmering under the clustered candles' glow. Through the vista of beautiful rooms the white covers of tables set with silver glimmered in perspective.

Weyward said: "This is a free-and-easy joint; let's dig hope out of a *paté* before we go among the elect for other nourishment."

Oliver was hungry enough to feel a modesty in such an unheralded assault on the tables, but he soon found that even genius on exhibition satisfied its material appetite before it pitched into the mental and spirituelle banquet.

"I know them," observed Weyward; "there won't be an olive left in an hour. You talked so much at dinner that I forgot to eat—there's a bald compliment for you, my friend!"

He balanced a glass of champagne and surveyed the scene cheerfully, advising Oliver to waste no time.

"Food for thought washed down with mental stimulants to be digested by discussion is a banquet that never yet attracted an empty stomach," said Weyward. "My heavens! What a barnyard scene this would make!" he added, as a little famished man, with a glittering bald head, stole the lobster under his very nose.

"That," he said, "was clever, even for a genius," as Oliver watched the little bald man attack the lobster with knife and fork.

"That is Joblotte, the classic poet of passion," said Weyward; "he's probably dreaming he's crowned with roses and stuffing Lucrine oysters at Domitian's feast; and that you and I are dancing-girls——"

"Nonsense," said Oliver; "authors are not actors."

"Aren't they, though!" said Weyward; "an actor is always an actor whether on or off the stage, but an author imagines everybody is part of a drama in which he is cast for the star part."

"Oh, Weyward! Weyward! stop your eternal nonsense," said Oliver, finishing his claret and edging away from the table.

Many people came up to speak to Weyward, and the majority of them appeared to be considerably interested when Oliver's name was mentioned. As for Oliver, he began to be genuinely surprised at finding that not only were his books perfectly familiar to all these people, but that he, himself, appeared to excite their interest and curiosity.

Marc Zisco, the famous playwright and critic, a little man, mostly nose, who continually rubbed his hands together and peered at anybody but the person with whom he conversed, said that he was very glad to meet Oliver, that he had read his books, and would like to know what Oliver thought of them.

"What I think of my own books?" repeated Oliver sharply, remembering Zisco's nasty remark concerning them.

But he did not snub Marc Zisco, for the little fellow looked as though he had seen hard times in the Ghetto, before he found a living in peddling epigrams to the Gentile.

"I think my books are worth criticising," said Oliver without too much malice.

"How can you expect criticism when nobody but critics criticise?" asked Zisco, displaying his wares with the naïve instinct of his race.

"Are the critics blind?" asked Oliver smiling.

"Blinder than the sightless, for even the sightless have their point of view and see their disadvantages."

Two epigrams were all Marc Zisco ever gave for the price of one man's attention; so he betook himself and his wares elsewhere, and Weyward and Oliver joined a group of men who were listening to that brilliant musical critic, Gerald Rix.

Rix's audience had keyed him to a pitch which only he could sustain; there were, among those who surrounded him, such men as Gisborn, tall, with keen blue eyes, and a simplicity of presence that does not always accompany the adored of women; then there was Winslow Vance, forever breaking his free-lance against saw-mills where good men practised rolling logs, and whose exquisite translations of Verlaine rivalled the originals; then there was Helm, the veteran musical critic, and Tenterdon, his confrère, who thought noble thoughts and—transcribed them in vitriol sometimes; and there was Richmond, master of style, and the most brilliant living American writer of short stories; and

there was Klepman, with his profile of a decadent Roman Emperor and his marvellous gifts and his frightful cynicism,—truly here was an audience to keep Gerald Rix to his pitch.

And he kept it. Oliver, too, fell under the spell, and Weyward stood beside, twisting his short yellow moustache and not losing a word.

One by one Oliver was presented to all these men, keen, uncompromising fellows who grasped his hand heartily and bade him and his books welcome.

“I don’t know how it is,” he said to Weyward, “but they all seem to have read my books.”

“My dear fellow, it is fame that you’re up against,” said Weyward; “your troubles are beginning. Cheer up! The worst is yet to come.”

It came. A lady with short hair who had been breathing down his neck, asked Weyward to present Oliver, and Oliver learned that he was facing the famous Miss Evelina Ballington Bogle, editor of the *Iron Quill*.

At first he thought she was a man, but her skirts betrayed her. She was short haired, stout, gnarled, with a heavy face and blunt fingers. Cold stupidity was stamped on every feature of her face; there was malevolence in her eye, too.

“You write?” she asked with the insolence of the unclassed.

“Yes,” replied Oliver pleasantly; “do you?”

Later Weyward remonstrated with him, chuckling as he did so:

“Why, man alive, she’ll slaughter you for that!”

But Oliver only scowled in reply :

“ I’m tired of this,” he said ; “ I never was made to be bullied by your women with three names, nor to be pawed by professional adorers, male or female. Let’s go, Weyward,—or let us talk to Rix’s crowd——”

“ Pooh,” said Weyward ; “ there’s material in all this, Oliver. Keep your eyes open ; you won’t find another barnyard like this.”

So Oliver met more three-named ladies, ladies with missions, ladies who had no use for side-combs, hydra-named ladies, ladies with pretty eyes and receptive minds, ladies who desired to inform themselves, ladies who lisped things that might mean two things, ladies who skirted the edges of decency with epigrams treasured for this evening only——

And the men ! He met Judge Bogle, whose face, in repose, was the most expressionless gargoyle he had ever beheld ; he met Jonas Tabb, who once wrote a poem and was now nearing his sixtieth year without a repetition of the offense ; he met William Henry Craw, the handsomest novelist in the United States ; he met J. Pidley-Peeters, playwright, and excavator of forgotten plays.

All these he met and wondered how they knew who he was.

“ Fame, my friend,” said Weyward’s caustic voice beside his ear ; “ the patronage of fame by fame is toothsome to the famous.”

Then, to his amazement and displeasure, Salmi Cheedle, the publisher, fairly fell on his neck, greet-

ing him with a fervour that made him ashamed of the human race.

"You had little use for me and my books when I was close to starvation," said Oliver.

And again Weyward took him to task, later:

"Don't talk like that," he said; "do you want the whole publishing guild down on you?"

"Damn the guild!" said Oliver shortly. But there was no use damning it; it would not be exorcised; for, in turn, almost every publisher who had snubbed him, came to say something agreeable. Seeley Fleeter, of Skipp, Fleeter and Company, tried to drag him into a corner to talk business, but old Weems got him away from Fleeter only to be deprived of Oliver, in his turn, by ponderous Mrs. Wattleby of the *Daily Comet*, who wished to know what hidden meaning lurked in page 161 of "The Self-Satisfied."

Weyward rescued him from that mountain of jellified erudition, and led him upstairs into a smoking-room where a handsome, clear-skinned young fellow was starting to punish a cocktail.

"Hello, Jack!" said Weyward; "I have been looking all over the barnyard for you."

The young man set down his cocktail, untasted, and rose to give Oliver a firm, cool hand.

"I wanted you," said Weyward frankly, "to talk shop. You don't mind, Stark, do you?"

"Not if Mr. Lock does not object," said John Stark laughing; "I want to publish Mr. Lock's next book and I don't object to saying so at once."

“By the way,” said Wayward with a significant smile, “Lock’s two books—which Mawly had, you know,—are on the market, too.”

Stark nodded, then sat down to give Oliver his undivided attention; and Weyward sauntered off into the billiard-room.

As he started to enter the billiard-hall Sidney Jaune came out of the swinging doors.

“How are you, Weyward,” he said familiarly; “you ought to have heard the row between Hawksby and Bilkerson over which should have my next book, ‘The Nude in a Nut Shell.’”

“Nasty title, I’m sure,” observed Weyward.

The Pink Rat, somewhat crest-fallen, explained that the title was only to make the book more saleable, and that it was not an indecent book, adding, with a complacent smirk, that Hawksby and Bilkerson were threatening law-suits and retaliations of a most alarming nature.

“When publishers fall out authors usually pay the piper,” said Weyward. “How did you get on with Mawly this morning?”

Sidney Jaune swore horribly at the mention of Mr. Mawly’s name, promising to crucify him in the next number of *The Pink Rat*, a remark that disgusted Weyward.

“Your race were given to crucifixions, I believe,” said Weyward, “but, if I recollect, it was not Barabas who suffered.”

Then he turned on his heel and entered the billiard-hall.

Only one table was lighted up, and that was at the further end of the hall. The rest of the rooms were dark and chilly, and Weyward strolled toward the three men who were solemnly executing simple carrom shots in a four-ball game.

The three men were Dawson, Rogueby and Magnelius Klaw. Divested of his coat, Magnelius, from his waist down, resembled the hind-quarters of an elephant, Dawson also presented pachydermic phenomena, and little Rogueby's similarity to a baby elephant would have been ludicrous had it not been slightly unpleasant.

As they, in turn, drove the ivory balls into the cushions with a labourious attention to the game that amused Weyward, Rogueby caught sight of him, standing in the shadow behind the table, and began to exhibit symptoms of excitement which puzzled Weyward.

"Good-evening," he said tranquilly. "I hope I do not disturb your game, Mr. Klaw."

He had always been on perfectly pleasant terms with the Klaw brothers, and the black scowl that little Rogueby gave him astonished him. His amazement increased when Dawson Klaw, in his shirt sleeves, shook his soft fat fist at him and burst into a torrent of abuse, while Magnelius solemnly waved his cue in the air like a fat Mephisto summoning his legions from the nether world under the billiard table.

"You and your friend Oliver Lock had better

look out!" snarled Dawson Klaw. "There's a law for conspiracy, I believe."

"Aha!" thundered Magnelius majestically, while little Rogueby smirked and chalked his cue in fury.

"May I suggest," said Weyward, with a long stare at Dawson, "that you offer a reward for the recovery of your senses?"

As he spoke, Oliver entered the room and came toward him, not recognising the Klaw family from the distance.

"There he is now!" squealed little Rogueby, hurling his chalk madly to the floor and dancing on the fragments.

The sight of Oliver appeared to infuriate Dawson, while brother Magnelius trumpeted "aha!" like a bull-elephant at bay.

"What's the matter with that foolish old man?" said Weyward, turning to meet Oliver. And Oliver himself did not know at first. Gradually, however, as he stared at the enraged brothers and listened to their accusations, the situation dawned on him in all its grotesqueness.

Indeed it was a viciously bizarre condition of affairs; the disreputable lawyer, Dyke Van Shuyster, had brought suit for fearfully heavy damages against Dawson Klaw in the name of his new client, Mrs. Wyvern.

Breach of promise was the charge, palpably a conspiracy between the woman and her attorney to blackmail that respectable gentleman, Dawson Klaw.

The bringing of such a case to trial meant a

scandal calculated to upheave the metropolis and work incalculable damage to the house of Klaw Brothers; and Oliver ceased to wonder why little Rogueby danced on the chalk, or why Magnelius bellowed like a whole herd of elephants.

"If," said Weyward with narrowing eyes, "you suppose that either I or Mr. Lock instigated such a thing, I shall take pleasure in posting you as unfit for this or any other club."

He flung a handful of billiard chalk straight into the open mouth of Magnelius, and walked away with Oliver.

"What on earth," said Weyward, "do those fools mean by accusing us?" It was the first time Oliver had ever seen Weyward very angry. He told him all he knew of the case, standing on the stairs to avoid the crush below. And then he spoke of Dulcie, hesitating, soberly guarded in what he said:

"This thing—this suit would kill her. Can't you stop it, Weyward? You know enough to disbar this fellow Van Shuyster."

Weyward shrugged his shoulders.

"Very well," said Oliver, quietly; "then I shall look for her until I find her——"

"And—if you find her?" asked Weyward.

Oliver knew what he meant. The angry colour slowly stained his face and his lips began to tighten again.

"Do you suspect my motive?" he said with an ugly look.

“Do you suspect it yourself, Oliver?” replied Weyward pleasantly.

Oliver looked at him in sullen silence. Weyward's eyes were kind but keen as daggers; he waited, a half smile on his lips, for Oliver's answer; then added: “Don't look her up; I fancy I can manage the affair to your satisfaction.”

Below them the murmur and movement of the thronged rooms rose with a rushing sound to the dim stairway where they were standing. Once Oliver imagined he heard his own name pronounced and repeated in the tumult, but he would not have heeded it had not Weyward bent his head to listen.

“Somebody is asking for you,” he said, and, again; “Oliver, they say that somebody wants you at the telephone!”

Together they descended the stairs, turned, Weyward leading, and passed through the bar-room under the second stairs to the telephone box. The servant in charge opened the door, saying that Mr. Payser wished to speak to Mr. Lock, and Oliver entered the box, picked up the receiver, sat down on the stool, and said; “Hello, Jack, what's up?”

Presently he came out of the box with a puzzled face and walked over to Weyward, who had improved the opportunity for a night-cap at the bar.

“It's Jack Payser; he says I am to come to the Monastery at once, but he refuses to say why. I promised I would. Will you come?”

“Certainly,” said Weyward, setting down his

glass ; " Jack Payser wouldn't disturb us here unless we were needed."

They ordered a cab at the cloak-room ; it arrived before they had their coats buttoned, and Weyward led the way out into the heavily falling snow.

The summons seemed to oppress Oliver ; Weyward gave up conversation after a while and lighted his cigar with cheerfulness unimpaired.

They drove straight down the splendid white avenue, set with its thousand arc-lights. The silent stepping of the horse over the snow, the noiseless revolution of the wheels, the million white flakes falling from the black void overhead, soothed Weyward, and he smoked tranquilly, one arm in the tasselled sling, watching the first storm of the dying year.

But Oliver, when at length they drew up before the Monastery, could scarcely find his key for nervousness, and it was Weyward who opened the storm-doors and unlocked the freezing portals within.

On the top landing Payser stood with a candle, and something in his face sent the chilled blood into Oliver's heart.

"What is it ?" he whispered, not daring to speak aloud.

The door of Ivan's studio was ajar, but no light streamed through the transom.

"It—it's in there," motioned Payser.

Oliver took the candle from his hand and stepped hastily into the dark doorway. Weyward followed, shading his eyes.

At first they saw nothing but the vast bulk of the picture, looming up, half lighted by the flaring candle. Then Oliver lowered the light. Ah! there it was—there on the floor at the picture's feet—that dusty black skirt and fur jacket—and one white hand outstretched, still clenching a tiny weapon shining brilliantly under the candle's steady flame.

CHAPTER XXV.

HIS HERITAGE.

In which Oliver appropriates everything in view and out of view.

DULCIE wrote one more letter, a violent little note ending in a small hurricane of contempt for his discourtesy and indifference.

There is only one violent passion that man forgives in woman, and that is love; there are none that she will not forgive in him.

Christmas had come to New York in a blizzard, piling the avenues' northern sidewalks waist-high with drifts, choking the cross streets through which steaming horses floundered in a flurry of powdered snow. All day long the discordant scrape of snow-shovels sounded through Washington Square, echoed and re-echoed from cross-street, alley and mews; all day long the light snow sifted down from the dappled limbs of the trees, or blew in long streamers from the roof-tops, fine and white as wind-whirled smoke. The park benches were turned to alabaster thrones, the marble arch loomed like a pearl cliff in the stretch of dazzling white, the fountain, crusted with crystal, grotesquely snow embossed, was all alive with hovering grey wings

where the sparrows gathered at daylight, flock after flock, waiting for the sun to melt their drinking water from the spotless drifts choking the southern parapets.

Somewhere in the streets boys were calling an "Extra"; the chiming sleigh-bells' thin, sweet harmony floated into the square from the noble avenue, as the sun gilded the waters of the bay and stained the spotless stole of the city with faintest rose. Then topaz lights came stealing over the snow, and the shadows changed from grey to violet, fading to translucent turquoise as the sun flashed up over the North River, setting the Jerseys in a white blaze from the Hook to the Palisades.

On the fitful wind came the hollow voice of an ocean steamer, the treble warning of tugs and packets outward bound, fainter now, now lost amid the humming rumours from the rivers where the steam-whistles gossiped, speaking together under a sky of deepest royal blue, shot with snowy jets of vapour.

The thousand flags that dipped their gemmed beauty in the sun rippled straight and free as the bay-wind rose and swept far seaward where acres of tossing white flecked the azure wastes, stretching to meet the waste of azure overhead.

From the Spitting Devil to Hell Gate, from Owl Head to the Bronx, the air was tinctured with the harmony of bells,—bells tumbling aloft in belfrys white with ice, bells sounding along the docks, brass bells striking from white pilot-decks, bells tinkling

through sleigh-tracked streets, round steel bells clanging from the snow-bound electric cars, stalled in endless lines. Even the hoarse voices of the men crying their "Extras," bore the intonation of deep bells.

Christmas brought its white blessing, disguised or undisguised, to all; Oliver awoke with fame tugging at the sheets, his letter crumpled in his hand; and he knew that poverty had passed away and doubt had vanished in the Christmas dawn. Weyward opened his eyes, then closed them. The prospect sweetened his returning slumber; for he expected two visitors for Christmas. Jack Payser greeted the morning behind a barricade of chips at John Daly's Temple of Hermes; Dick Trivol, lying on his back in bed, hesitated how to squander the proceeds of an unexpected check from one of the turtle-fed patrons of his easel; Ivan, in Los Angeles, dreamed under a rose trellis, intoxicated with life and youth and the scented bays of victory;—and Tessie dreamed under the white drifts beside the eastern ocean, whiter than the pall the snow had spread above her narrow bed, her lover's picture on her breast.

So, disguised or undisguised, the Christmas blessing fell on all;—and on Dulcie Wyvern, too, if she had only known it.

But the ice-coated train that the heavy engine dragged through the flat, snow-packed Jerseys carried Dulcie northward against her will; for the city had grown horrible to her, since he had forgot-

ten. She lay shivering in her berth, heart-sore, hopeless, desolate, with the northern chill in her heart, and the scent of the southern orange groves still clinging to her hair.

The day was magnificent, the sky blue as an iceberg, the sun a blinding blot, ringed with pale fierce flame that played like the splash of molten gold over the frozen world.

Oliver awoke with the beauty and love of all things in his heart—the love of this sun-gemmed land, of the iron city, frost-plated, inlaid and enamelled with crystals;—and he saw the tracery of snowy branches in the square, and the bright flags in the sun-drenched sky. The love of all things was in his heart; the beauty of his city, of this fair free heritage, was upon him. The voices from the rivers called to him, the snow-bells' symphony chimed sweet invitation; a sparrow dropped from the azure to his window-ledge: twittering of freedom and careless faith in the goodness of a Heaven which had cast forth its snow to cover a small bird's daily bread.

When he went out into the white glare of the square, the sun wove an iridescent veil over the ice-sheathed twigs, spreading a faint rainbow radiance across the snow below, where the laced frost embossed soft crystalline drifts with traceries of palest amethyst. Frail shadows lay across the soft white mounds; the button-balls on the sycamores hung and swung like crystal pendants under silver-frosted candelabra; the marble arch dripped from its icy

gargoyles, and every slender snow-stalactite shed single liquid gems, dropping silently through palest sunshine.

Into the snow-bound side street he wandered, to the city's artery, where the tide of life set sluggishly southward through a cañon of discoloured snow.

Men were working everywhere, heaping the snow into pyramids, between which the cable-cars passed slowly, striking their brass bells, and the great commercial channel echoed with the rumble of short, heavy carts, loaded with snow. But the iron cliffs and window-pierced ledges of brick were silent; steel shutters sealed the windows, vast iron aprons concealed the portals, the blank curtains were drawn across the acres of plate glass, and the rolling grilles were padlocked.

Clustered flags brightened each sheer height, brilliant as flower-crowned crags, and the strip of blue above, between the edges of the precipice, flowed like a heavenly river winding through the sky.

There was little wind in the depths of the street although the banners in the sky rippled in every fold; and, walking on through the snow, he felt the cold softening in the sunlight. A man offered him an "Extra," muttering of a "terrible accident" and "loss o' life," but he shook his head.

Vapour rose from the square where the stained marble façade of the City Hall glowed in the sun. He crossed the car-tracks by the bronze martyr on his pedestal, skirted the red and grey heights

to the south and east, setting his face toward that disjointed structure of steel that marks the terminal moraine of the great bridge. Here boys shouted more "Extras" about an accident on the Jersey Meadows. Oliver pushed through the crowd and mounted the stairs.

An icy wind was blowing up the river when, at last, he stood under the northern tower and felt the quiver of the suspended mass of steel beneath his feet.

Under him a great ship with topmasts housed followed a hissing tugboat toward the sea, and, in the brilliant wake, a gull drifted, white wings slowly beating.

Southward where the Owl's Head hid the Narrows, he could see the Lower Bay and the sun on ships at sea; and he thought of his home-coming through the June fog, and his first glimpse of the bronze colossus which had been to him the angel with the flaming sword. There she towered, torch uplifted, metal mantle swept by the Arctic wind, crowned with a glory from her spikes of bronze. Under her lifted arm he had found liberty and bread—more than she promised after all. Aye, more than she gave to all who passed the seas that wash her scandaled feet,—he had found his heritage, and had come into it through bitter paths.

His heritage? There it lay in white and gold, five royal Boroughs, Richmond, Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan, and the Bronx,—all his, for the love he bore them, for his pleasure, for his fortune, for the

delight of his eyes. To weave his tales from the threads of the city's life was his right and his happiness, to prophesy belonged to him, to raise his voice for the iron city, to chide, to rejoice with it, to sorrow when it sorrowed, was his, too, and he knew it. He would interpret its reason for existence, he would translate the splendour of its purpose, he would make a language to spread the gospel graven on this iron altar of the world.

As his eyes swept the horizon, studying the gospel he should preach, the magnitude of the mystery increased, appalling him. How should he tell the story of a city, scarcely emerging from the chaos which was one day to bring it forth? That thin, unsightly skin of iron, that flimsy covering of brick and stone, those sham walls unsupported by foundations were as temporary, as insignificant as the first moulting skin of an insect embryo. What was there to seize on? Nothing in that twisted iron tangle was permanent, nothing was typical save the sky that lighted it. The absence of all type, the temporary profiles, the ensembles that changed in a week and were revolutionized in a year, left no key for artist or writer to interpret or celebrate a city that yesterday he knew, but to-day had outgrown his memory, and that to-morrow should find with scarcely a trace of what distinguished it to-day.

Laws, customs, people, ideas, aims, beliefs, changed as the city's shape changed; nothing rested, nothing stood still, nothing remained of yes-

terday to justify to-day, nor was the guarantee of to-day intelligible to those who asked what to-morrow might bring forth.

That tower-packed sky-line, those endless table-lands of arid roofs, those blunt peaks honey-combed with windows, were phenomena of the year; another year would find new frames for the sky, new chasms through which new people would wind their way. Like a tented fair where circus and booth and palaces of scantlings spring up with the dawn in tinselled pomp, the night should find their glory passed away, and a new fair there, setting up palaces of gilt and towers with paper battlements, while the caravan was already waiting to take the traces of the pageantry away, ceding the camping ground for other caravans already drawing nigh.

Yet, out of the débris called a city, already permanency and type were emerging; traces of former caravans endured,—not many, but here and there a monument or a tablet to the busy people of the past.

And even from the people themselves a type was slowly forming, welded from mass on mass of human pilgrims who had gathered from the back of the four winds.

Like continents in transition, like *nebulæ* gathering toward cohesion, like particles of precious metal crushed from the ore to gather by their weight under the purifying stream, the new world, the peoples, the fittest to survive, were slowly passing through the slow ordeal toward an ensemble that

liberty should grasp and shape and batter with the blows of centuries in a nation's symmetry.

The splendid outline of the plan fenced the horizon; the chimneys of five mighty boroughs wrote it in the air, writing tirelessly; the three rivers sang of it, the three bays intoned the anthem, the ocean thundered, "It must be!"

Millions of people were toiling for it; millions lived for it, all unconsciously; millions had died for it; millions should die. But, oh, the millions that should be born for it——!

Yes, his heritage was fair indeed. He heard the river whistles blowing, he heard the humming wires underfoot, he heard the soft tumult from the millions, he heard the gulls squealing in the winter sky. Northward the foxes of Westchester lapped the night-ripples of the Bronx; eastward the woodcock still dropped among the swamps of Queens; westward the wild hawks sailed above the Kill Von Kull; southward the sea fowl scuttered out to sea. But his heritage lay from Scotland Light to Mount St. Vincent and from Valley Stream to Green Bed Light. His the millions of Manhattan, his the villages of the Bronx, his the manors of Richmond, the hundred thousand homes of Brooklyn, the farms of Queens. Where the wild duck rose on Silver Hale Marsh, swung west past Ruffle Bar, past Old Swale Marsh, then north, swinging as wild ducks fly, past Yellow Bar Hassock, then eastward to the Raunt,—there also lay his young metropolis of a splendid land, governing her five humming bee-hive

Boroughs set with monuments and hills and the reedy haunts of wild things.

In the sky, the jewelled flag was his sign, on earth he made his covenant with truth to be a faithful prophet of his land, his people, and his heritage.

* * * * *

When through the golden vapours of the afternoon he passed homeward along the snowy paths of unfamiliar streets, he came suddenly to Broadway. Across the street he saw the stained grave-stones through the railing of St. Paul's; an elevated train rushed past, beyond, and the white steam blew through the mouldering rows of tombs, dripping with melting snow. A cripple shoved a paper at him, mumbling of death on a train, and Oliver gave him a little money, refusing the paper.

The sun was low when he entered his room. He sat down, tired and thoughtful, watching the snow crystals melting on his sleeve. After a while he drew Dulcie's letter from his pocket, Grippe came to sit at his feet and watch him read.

"It is better after all," he said, tranquilly. "If I had loved her I should have known it long ago. I have never loved; I have come no closer to it than pity." He dropped his head on his hand listening to the newsboys calling their "Extra! Extry!" through the square outside.

Presently Grippe rose, whining, and a step sounded close to his door. It was Weyward who entered wishing him a Merry Christmas.

"And the same to you, Weyward," said Oliver gayly, offering his hand. "Hello! What's the matter with your arm?"

Weyward gave him his left hand, saying something carelessly about burning his fingers, then he sat down, with an absent caress for Grippe.

"About that suit against Klaw—" he said abruptly.

Oliver nodded, looking keenly at Weyward.

"It's settled," continued the other.

"You mean it will never come to trial?" asked Oliver eagerly.

"No—it will never come to trial."

His face was unusually grey, his eyes tired and careworn. Oliver asked him if his hand pained very much.

"Yes," said Weyward, as though thinking of something else.

"There is something troubling you?"

"Yes—I don't know. I made a mess of blocking that suit."

"Made a mess of it?" repeated Oliver, disturbed.

"In a way. I wired Van Shuyster that I would meet him to-day at the depot—in Jersey, you know. He was in Florida—but he came north. I fancy he knew the game was up. He came north with Mrs. Wyvern."

"You have seen them?"

"Ye—es," said Weyward slowly.

Oliver waited, hot with impatience. Finally he

said irritably; "What's the matter anyway? I wish you'd tell me what they said!"

"They didn't say anything—you see—they are dead."

"Dead!" cried Oliver horrified.

"Yes—their train went through the trestle this morning, just outside the yard limit. I was waiting for it at the depot, and I went out on one of the switch engines."

He hesitated, looking down at Grippe, who was sniffing at his bandaged hand. He continued without looking at Oliver: "The cars caught fire,—they always do, you know. We put out some of the flames with snow."

He rose wearily, still avoiding Oliver's eyes:

"Something else occurred," he said. "Did you really love Dulcie Wyvern?"

Oliver sprang to his feet, clutching the table with both hands. A terrible fear struck through and through him; he tried to utter speech; he could not move his lips.

"If you did," said Weyward, under his breath, "you would know it now."

Outside the voices of the boys crying news of the disaster grew distant; the scraping of a snow shovel drowned the dying echoes in the square.

Weyward turned, then swung around, looking the younger man straight in the eyes:

"She was on the train: it went through the trestle into the Jersey meadows."

Oliver swayed where he stood.

"I have seen her," said Weyward slowly.

Then Oliver's dry lips formed the word—"Dead?" And again, he spoke louder: "Is she dead? Can't you speak? Don't stand there—" he cried out, "don't look that way—look at me! Good God!—Can't you see I love her?"

"Then—tell her so," said Weyward sharply. "The little thing is in Saint Stephen's Hospital with both hips broken,—asking for you."

CHAPTER XXVI.

GOSSIP.

A chapter ending in the odour of mignonette if not in the odour of sanctity.

WEYWARD spent January, February and March in selling bath-tubs and dictating letters to his new typewriter, Sylvia Tring. But during all that time he sent no letter to Oliver, preferring to wait until he could write without the assistance of the airy mediator on the typewriter.

"Don't you ever write letters to women?" asked Sylvia one day. Weyward had spoiled her enough to find her amusing, but this was over-stepping all privileges.

"Oh, yes," he said amiably, "I'm going to write one now." And he dictated a note to Sylvia herself requesting her to amuse herself exclusively with her own affairs; a task she found impossible, however.

"As if I cared who you write to!" she said, nose in the air. "You don't know much about business, either; if you did you'd photograph your bath-tubs with me turning on the water and then people would read your stupid advertisements in the backs of the magazines."

Sylvia's ideas were still dramatic although she had severed her connection with the Athenian Music Hall. But a certain wholesale grocer was after her with painfully honourable intentions, and Weyward, sympathising with the wholesale gentleman, had offered Sylvia a chance to habituate herself to the humdrum before she decided whether or not she could exist outside of the limelight.

"I don't know why I should marry him," said Sylvia, clicking her typewriter sentimentally; "it would kill Jack Payser——"

"It will kill Jack Payser if you don't," said Weyward.

"And," continued Sylvia, "I haven't had half enough——"

"What?"

"Fun!" said Sylvia.

"Try respectability," said Weyward; "you have no idea how much excitement you can get out of it!"

"What nonsense!" said Sylvia.

"It's no nonsense," replied Weyward; "you can't begin to do justice to fun until you're respectable! My word for it, Sylvia, the faster you live the slower you find it, and there's more deviltry in married monotony than you'll find in the whole Moulin Rouge."

"What's the Moulin Rouge?" asked Sylvia.

"One of the mills of the gods," replied Weyward. "Will you please take this in shorthand:—

“ Messrs. Nicol, Spigott, and Company :

“ Gentlemen :—Replying to your valued letter of the twenty-second instant——”

However, toward the end of April, the deep burns in his hand had healed sufficiently for a course of massage, and, by May, Weyward was able to hold his pen.

The first note he wrote was directed to a woman. It ended :

“ I send you Oliver Lock’s ‘ Iron City ’ ; it’s the book of the year ; already the amalgamated association of idiots is comparing him to Thackeray—but that need not bother you. Oliver Lock has come very close to writing something permanent. They may spoil it all by gabbling about the great American novel ; it’s much broader than that.

* * * * *

“ As I sit here in the sunshine I see your slipper before me on the table, — and the perfume of mignonette set me thinking. You know the lines—Moyr Smith’s—

“ ‘ Mrs. Aphrodite
Gave her little sonny
Lots of golden curls
But little golden money.
Gold when it’s in curls
Leads the world astray ;
Gold when it’s in coin
Acts the selfsame way.’

“ You sing something like that when you play your harp—don’t you ?

* * * * *

"I am very sorry the panic in Wall Street should have affected anybody I know. By the way, there seems to be an account opened in your name at the Bronx River Bank ; I enclose details which you will destroy. Pray take no trouble to answer this—by letter——"

He turned the paper over and added a few words, then sealed the envelope, rang for a messenger, and began his second letter, first directing the envelope to Oliver Lock, Esq're., High Springs Hospital, North Carolina :

"You understand what the trouble has been ; I fancy the massage treatment saved my hand from being merely ornamental.

"I saw John Stark about 'The Iron City' ; he says it is selling very well. Have you seen any reviews, I mean any intelligent criticisms ?

"Marc Zisco cuts you up very cleverly. He is a master of the art of self advertisement ; he'll probably find some way of using his own decease to boom his soul.

"I am reading your book ; it's fairly good ; you can do better. But it is the next book you write that will tell.

"You ask me for news, Oliver, and I know nothing much more recent than the Louis XVI incident. However, Jack Payser came into the office to-day—and you know what vile gossips men can be. So here you are——

"Mazie McNair has gone into Romaine's company—rather an advance from the Athenian. She has talent and intelligence ; it's a toss up which way she climbs. Sylvia Tring is going to marry a wholesale gentleman. Little Violet has gone back

to her people,—and, by the way, your friend Chatterton Mawly was arrested the other day. I don't know what for, but I fancy he'll wriggle out of it.

“I have seen nothing of Dawson, Magnelius and Rogueby Klaw, but I notice they are advertising a new edition of Pidley's “Purity of Living,” with an introduction by Magnelius Klaw.

“As for the Monastery, it is the same austere and serene cloister that you knew,—a quiet retreat for meditation and prayer. The monks occupy their ancient cells, Tom Fydo, Trivol, the Vice Consul for Yucatan, your friend Sidney Jaune, little Veeder and the others. The Count has found money somewhere—I suspect he has been blackmailing that good man Dawson Klaw. He seems quite cheerful, and has an expensive apartment uptown.

“*Zig-Zag* has gone into the hands of a receiver, but your friend Eugene Smith drives a mail-coach and four. How do they do it, Oliver?

“I suppose you know Ivan is dead. They say it was accident, the shooting. The whole thing is too tragic for gossip, so I shall say no more. We all may be in for the same thing some day—we of the gay unclassed.

“Your letters come, week after week, but if I had had the heart to answer them, my bandaged hand has been in the way—and I could not dictate the things I shrink from saying. And, Oliver, I cannot believe that Dulcie is not going to get well. I will *not* believe it. You say she is able to be carried out to your skiff, and breathe the soft air, and I cannot see why you are discouraged. If the doctors say she can never again walk, let them say it, but don't for a moment believe it. She will live and grow strong and walk,—it is wicked to doubt it! There is a God—even for us outsiders——”

A knocking at his door interrupted him. He stood up irresolutely ; there was a swish of skirts in the hallway.

As he opened the door the air grew sweeter, tintured with the delicate fragrance of mignonette.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A SHIP SAILS.

Containing a chart of the oldest harbour in the world.

A SMALL dog presided at the tiller. The May sunlight, slanting on the water, turned the tiny sail to a sheet of gilt. There was no wind; the white craft drifted shoreward where slender willows dimpled the water.

In the sky the peaks of the Blue Ridge towered, cloud-belted, and the shadows on their forest-mantled flanks deepened the velvet bloom.

At the river's bend a little puff of fragrance—scarcely a breeze, filled the sail for an instant: the thin films of sunlit water danced with a silken sound under the bows, then the sail fell again, and the idle water spread away in a smooth, flat sheet of gold.

Dulcie lay silent on her cushions, whiter than the heaps of flowering laurel crowning the river ledges with snow, far as the eye could see. Her crutches lay in the boat beside her. Oliver lifted an oar:

“There is no wind, Dulcie,—only this breath of perfume——”

"Let us drift," she murmured, closing her grey eyes.

They were slipping past a forest now, heaped with the snow of the laurel, heavy with the scent of magnolia.

The dusky shadows came out to bar the water with their purple tints, the jessamine hung its gold brocade athwart their bows, azalias flamed along the coast like tiny torches signalling the port.

Trailing vines, entwining mast and tiller, swung them shoreward. In the forest's hush, the spring-tide mass was celebrated by the cardinals robed in fire, the grey hermit-thrush crept out to listen, the tall pines stirred; then the river, which had waited, rippled on.

"Let us anchor here," she said.

He answered, but she did not speak again. Her face was whiter than the laurel blossom floating beside the idle oar.

Furtive shadows came out to bar the water with their purple tints, the jessamine hung its gold brocade athwart their bows, azalias flamed along the coast like tiny torches signalling the port,—the Port of Love.

Trailing vines, entwining mast and tiller, held them. In the forest's hush, the spring-tide mass was celebrated by the cardinals, robed in fire, the grey hermit-thrush crept out to listen, the tall pines stirred; then the river, which had waited, flowed on, bearing the white laurel blossom on its gilded ripples.

“We are at anchor,” he whispered. “Are you rested? Shall we drift again, Dulcie?”

But she had already drifted far beyond his hail.

—END.—

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